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CAN WE NOT DO MORE ?

Amid the ill news from Java and Burma, the story of the Commando raid on the French coast has cheered and excited us all. It was, to be sure, on a very small scale. The men who landed from the skies spent only two hours on French soil, and we suppose that a bomber with good luck might have destroyed that radio-location post with much less effort. But the exploit, none the less, had every merit that we miss elsewhere. It was perfectly planned and it went without a hitch. It showed dash and the aggressive mind. It made a good use of a new arm, the parachute troops, which we had been backward in adopting. Above all, on a minute scale, it was a model essay in warfare in three elements. The success of the Japanese to-day is to be traced largely to their mastery of this idea. Their whole campaign is a colossal " commando " operation; they can do with hundreds of thousands of men what we are just learning to do with hundreds. Ships, planes, tanks and infantry, equally at home in three elements, move together like a gigantic sea-bird, which flies, swims or walks at will. The comparison reveals to us how far we still have to progress. We shall be in sight of winning this war when we have revised our training, re-educated the officers of all three services, and remodelled the organisation of their High Commands so that every movement is conceived as an operation always in two and often in three elements.

How rapidly are we carrying out this revolution in tactics and organisation? Commando raids would begin to count, if we could multiply their scale and frequency several times over. Are we getting ready to do something bigger of this kind, say once a week or even twice: to stay ashore two days instead of two hours, and to dash inland with a small mechanised column a matter of fifty miles or more? If we could thrust in this way, with many imaginative variations in method, at points on Hitler's coast-line ranging from Bordeaux to Narvik, with all the effect of surprise; if we could on occasion seize a suitable " Tobruk " and hold it; if a raid that went well could become a minor invasion in some tempting peninsula—if we could do anything approaching this in the spring and summer, we might effect a diversion that would have a substantial effect on the course of the war in Europe. At present the entire weight of the fighting in this continent falls on Russia. With all her undaunted courage can she sustain it with such aid as she is receiving from us?

The aid we have given in supplies has been indispensable. It was on a generous scale and up to the date of Lord Beaverbrook's last report everything we promised was punctually delivered. That good record must at all costs be maintained. No demands from the Middle East ought to compete with our supplies to Russia. Our deliveries are doubly important because the Americans admit that they have sent only half their allotted quantities. The German factories, meanwhile, are running at full speed to prepare for the spring drive into the Caucasus. With this prospect in view, let us look at Russia's situation.

For three months the Red Army has been conducting a relentless counter-offensive over the whole front. The positive results are impressive. The enemy has been rolled back from the approaches to Moscow. The thrust towards the Caucasus was defeated when Rostov was recovered. A few strong advanced points which the enemy defended stubbornly, notably Kalinin, Mojaisk, Kaluga and Tula have been retaken, and much ground round Leningrad won back. The conjectural maps in the daily papers show vast pincers movements developing hopefully, which may one day entrap a big German army at Staraya Russa, catch Smolensk in their giant claws, and reach Dnieperpetrovsk if all goes well. The Germans have lost heavily in men and material—let us hope more heavily than the Russians. But as yet the obstinate German defence retains many strong points of great value—Schlusselburg, Novgorod, Rzhev, Vyazma, Orel, Kharkov and Taganrog. Leningrad is still encircled, though by only a narrow belt on the east. It can be reached to-day across the ice of Lake Ladoga, but if that belt holds it will again be isolated in spring. The least comfortable reflection of all is that the Germans still hold in the Crimea and the towns of the Southern Ukraine strong positions that will greatly facilitate their movements, when in spring they renew their offensive towards the Caucasian oil-wells.

It is not easy to make a forecast; the Russians may yet reap the fruits of movements that obviously are well planned. But the enemy is still tough and combative; somehow he does resist the cold and his transport system can perform prodigies. We do not doubt that the Russians have reserves, but at the best they will have to face a terrible test in spring and summer, with what success no man can foresee. It is obvious that if the Germans could then reach Baku, the war would be indefinitely prolonged. The Russians with little oil for warfare, industry and agriculture would be permanently lamed. Could we then hold the Middle East? There, or at home, the brunt of the war in Europe, as in Asia, would then fall on us.

Such, in brief, is the case for a maximum effort this spring to lessen the weight of that dreaded march towards the Caucasus. We have heard recently plain appeals for a second front from Mr. Litvinov, General Sikorsky and Dr. Wellington Koo. We should not forget that the Germans use their minor allies against Russia—Roumanians, Hungarians, Italians, Finns, Slovaks, even Spaniards—at least half a million men. There are ominous signs, moreover, which suggest a coming Japanese attack, as well.

The psychological effect on the Russians of our continued immobility should be kept in mind. If only for reasons of self-preservation, we assume that all of us, Right as well as Left, wish to do the utmost in our power. The utmost ought to mean very much more than raids even on the biggest scale. We need not recite the difficulties that tell against a continental expedition—chiefly the shortage of shipping; secondly, lack of tanks and planes; finally, since only under an air "umbrella" can a landing succeed, the limitation to shores and ports near our own airfields. Our past strategy of dispersal handicaps us now, since Libya absorbs fantastic quantities of tonnage. But the real reason for the refusal to contemplate a Second Front in Europe was that Mr. Churchill had an alternate plan for victory. His belief that it could be won mainly by the night-bomber is contradicted by experience, and Sir Archibald Sinclair said nothing in Wednesday's debate to make it plausible. Some diversion we must attempt, if only, for a start, in the form of ambitious raids. All that is conscious and awake among us would plead for the utmost effort in our power—and a little more than that.

Home Front. *(By an Industrial Correspondent.)*

Is there to be a Minister of Production, or is there not? Do the steps taken by Lord Beaverbrook during his brief tenure as Minister of Production still hold good? For example, does the Committee set up under Sir Walter Citrine to examine problems of regional control of production regard itself as in or out of existence? Is there to be one minister in charge of reconstruction, or as hitherto, a couple? Will Lord Portal introduce a bill to implement the Uthwatt Report (as Lord Reith was going to do), or is he purely the Minister for Works and Buildings? Will Sir William Jowitt, as Mr. Greenwood's successor, co-ordinate the various committees engaged in post-war planning?

* * *

What are the essential things we are looking for from these three needed Ministers? From the Minister of Production we want at once three things: (1) Effective decentralisation and regional reorganisation of the war industries; (2) a drastic change in the controls and in the contractual relations between the big private firms and the State; and (3) a thorough inquest on the aircraft industry, which is generally regarded as having got into a most disastrous mess. The first of these matters was presumably to have been dealt with by Sir Walter Citrine's Committee; the second is a matter of high policy, with which only the War Cabinet can deal; the third, I suggest, should be referred to Sir William Beveridge, whose report on skilled men in the armed forces shows that he is exactly the man for the job. As long as these three questions are tackled, it does not matter much whether Mr. Oliver Lyttelton is called Minister of Production or Minister of State in general charge of production problems. What does matter is that the job shall be got on with quickly, and that proper ruthlessness shall be shown. Closely related to the third problem is, of course, the question whether we are even now making the right kinds of aircraft—quite apart from the question whether we are making aircraft of all types in such quantities as can reasonably be expected of the industry. This question of the right type is, of necessity, a military rather than an economic one; but it has its economic aspect, because change of types is bound to involve substantial delay for retooling. It is being argued on this ground that we cannot afford to make any extensive changes in the types we produce (and the same argument is used in the case of tanks). But surely we had better have even a further lag in the rate of output for a brief period than go on producing the wrong equipment for our forces. Nor am I convinced that retooling need, if properly organised, take nearly as long as the opponents of change contend it must. If they are right, there must be something badly amiss with our methods of toolroom organisation.

* * *

What do we want from a Minister in charge of reconstruction? We want, above all else, someone who can talk authoritatively to the United States, to the Dominions, and to the Allied European Governments about the key problems of European reorganisation and the rebuilding of world trade. This is even more urgent than the problem of domestic reconstruction, because we cannot possibly direct the right sort of propaganda towards Nazi-controlled Europe, or towards India, or, indeed, anywhere else, until we have a tolerably clear notion, authorised by the Government, of the kind of new world order we are trying to build. At present, the Allied Governments are very restive because they have a feeling that Great Britain and the United States are trying to settle the new world order behind their backs—and also, incidentally, behind the back of the Soviet Union. The truth is that there is *no* British policy in these matters. The Treasury, the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Economic Warfare, and a number of other official bodies are all conducting unco-ordinated operations in the field of post-war international affairs. But there is no clear policy, and no effective co-ordination. I believe Mr. Greenwood was just beginning to try to tackle some of these problems before he was cast out.

* * *

What do we want from the Ministry of Works and—whatever it is—or, rather, from the Ministry of Planning which we supposed it was about to turn into under Lord Reith's control? We want a body which, in addition to organising the building and civil engineering industries for their wartime tasks, can set about getting practical decisions about the extent and form of post-war physical reconstruction. Unless we plan ahead for the physical rebuilding of Great Britain, on whatever scale we decide that early rebuilding is appropriate, we shall find ourselves in a hopeless mess for a long while after the war is actually over. The building industry is obviously the key position for preventing an immediate post-war slump and for absorbing, directly and indirectly, a considerable portion of the men to be demobilised from the armed forces. But it cannot perform these tasks unless the scale on which it is to be expected to perform them is planned well in advance; for there must be provision for emergency training of building workers, and that implies advance provision for training the requisite instructors. Moreover, it will take, at best, a long time after we have settled our general plan of reconstruction to get the practical details worked out for each locality, so as to allow work to begin without delay at the word "Go." For these purposes a real Planning Ministry, armed with large powers, is indispensable. In my view, such a Ministry cannot possibly do the job unless it takes over housing, as well as town and country planning, from the Ministry of Health, or unless it has a large say in questions of the location of industry, which are at present within the reference of the Board of Trade. It is understood that these powers were not meant to be handed over to the proposed Ministry of Works and Planning when the change of name was announced, and that little more was proposed than a transfer of the Ministry of Health's powers under the Town and Country Planning Act. Even this may, for all I know, be more than we are now to get; but, whether or no, it is wretchedly inadequate. Nor can real planning possibly be tackled until the Government faces up to the fact that our system of local government must be drastically reformed, from the standpoint of getting more suitable areas as well as from that of finding a new basis for local finance.

* * *

Heavy shipping losses ought to mean tighter belts, especially if we are to make offensive war on the Germans this year in Europe, in order to help the Russians to break the backbone of the Nazi power. We cannot therefore legitimately ask for more soap (or more anything) for some consumers without agreeing that more for some means less for others. The soap ration, as it stands, is quite plainly unfair—to those who wash clothes at home, to workers in dirty trades, to families with a number of young children, and so on. But, if we agree that these classes of consumers must have more, the rest of us must be ready to make do with less. A great many people are in the habit of wasting soap through sheer carelessness. In *Sylvia and Bruno*, the crowd before the palace cried out "Less Bread: More Taxes." It is our duty now to cry out for less of a good many things we can make shift to do without.

The "Struma" Tragedy

In the furnace of human suffering, the sinking of one small ship in the Black Sea, laden with Jewish refugees from Rumania, may easily pass unnoticed. But these are lives that could have been saved, lives which were on the threshold of salvation, and we are forced to say that their loss seems to lie at the door of the British authorities in Jerusalem and at the Colonial Office. Here is the story, so far as we know it. On December 15, the "Struma" put into Istanbul a cargo-boat laden with men, women and children fleeing from Rumania. They sought entry into Palestine. They had no certificates of immigration, as they came from enemy territory, but the Jews had not exhausted their quota in Palestine, and places were available. The Jewish Agency in Jerusalem pleaded with the High Commissioner for their admission—they could have been placed in an internment camp there until their *bona fides* were established, and all risk of the presence of enemy agents eliminated. But the Jewish Agency pleaded in vain. After the lapse of weeks the "Struma" again put out to sea. It is now established that she has blown up and sunk. Of 769 passengers there are reported to be eight survivors, and we may possibly know from them some details of how this accident occurred—if accident it were. But the horrible idea intrudes itself that the people on board may have felt it was better to die than to fall again into the hands of Antonescu and his raving anti-Semites. We are informed that permission was given at the last moment for children under sixteen to be landed—but apparently too late. There must be an enquiry into the circumstances.

ADVERTISED GOODS.—The fact that goods made of raw materials in short supply owing to war conditions are advertised in this paper should not be taken as an indication that they are necessarily available for export.

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A SENSE OF URGENCY

No one expects sudden changes in the military situation as a result of the change of Government. In any case we have to face, as Mr. Churchill warned us, a series of further disasters; most people, if they believe that Britain is collaborating with the Soviet Union in the most effective way, accept them with fortitude. But on the Home Front they have a right to expect some quick results. If victories have to wait, changes at home do not. The House of Commons greeted with enthusiasm the phrase used by Sir Stafford Cripps about the need of "austerity"; they were pleased with his promise to interpret the House to the Government as well as the Government to the House, and they saw, as Sir Stafford took careful notes of their remarks, the promise that someone in authority would at last have the time and inclination to attend to serious complaints and well-informed suggestions.

Psychologically, the appearance of a Minister of undoubted ability and determination, who not only promised to look into complaints, but who also gave the impression that he might do so with some effect, is of the utmost importance. Democracy, and with it the spirit of common people in the war, is endangered, not by the decay of interest in the Party system—that is a symptom—but by the failure on the part of harassed Ministers to understand the mood of the nation. Ultimately our fate depends on the feeling of participation in government in the minds of each man and woman. The breach has been growing. Ministers are divorced from M.P.s and M.P.s and Ministers from the country. An important step has been taken towards once more restoring confidence.

It is still a small step. Great difficulties have to be overcome. The House of Commons is ridiculously unrepresentative and a General Election neither an easy nor a certain remedy. Instead, Ministers have to look for guidance about popular demands to the press and other channels; they may note that the changes advocated envisage none of that divorce between winning the war and the peace, which is so often in the minds of Ministers and Civil Servants. The discussion in the House about the death of Col. Blimp is merely symptomatic of a much wider demand—the demand for a society in which we no longer suffer from the privileges and prejudices of an out-of-date class system. We have seen its results at work not only in Singapore, but also in Whitehall.

It is good to hear it said that Blimpery is dead, and with Sir Stafford Cripps and other Ministers speaking of Indian self-government, discussing the prevention of ludicrous waste in racing and boxing, the destruction of the Black Market, promising fairer rationing and a score of other things, people are prepared to believe that at last a new broom is at work. A short period of goodwill in which all the critics will be silenced, a honeymoon period of harmony between Government and public is before us. It may last for another week, it may last triumphantly for months. Its duration depends on the actual fulfilment of some of the hopes held out. Everywhere people are conscious that vested interests impede the war, and they are prepared for a change in the whole national system, for the State to take over the mines, and any inefficient industry, and for the introduction of siege economics. Is there a way of reassuring men about the post-war period except by the vision of concrete proposals for a changed educational and social system? Can the sour talk that goes round in the Forces be ended except by getting rid of Brass Hats in whom the ranks have no confidence and in introducing democratic reforms into the Forces? Is there any way of convincing the rank-and-file that the best is being done, unless by our political warfare and open statement of purpose, our readiness to provoke revolution on the Continent and co-operate with it is made clear? Can the three Services achieve efficiency in combined operations, working with revolutionary forces on the Continent, without a change of outlook in Whitehall — without, above all, promoting that layer of efficient and forward-looking younger officers whose frustration by their superiors is one of the major scandals of this war? Lack of shipping and shortage of tanks are not reasons for refusing such changes as these. The sense of urgency, whose lack Sir Stafford Cripps deplored on his arrival, is still not adequately with us, but its absence is due not to something that is wrong with the common man, but to failure and divisions in national leadership.

RECONSTRUCTION—WHEN?

The Labour Party has given to the report on reconstruction which it has just issued the title of *The Old World and the New Society*; and the burden of the entire report is that we are to enter, when the war is over, on a radically new way of living. There is a refreshing difference of tone between this pronouncement and earlier declarations. As far as the Labour Party can be judged by this document, its leaders do understand that their own as well as other people's past programmes are outmoded. The document just published is but an interim report, limited in the main to general declamations of principle. Only when we see how the new principles are interpreted shall we be able really to tell how far the Labour Party has succeeded in bringing itself abreast of the times.

Until then, we have only the generalities to go by. They are for the most part excellent, as far as they go—the principal exception being a curiously timid and ambiguous paragraph about India. It is nowhere stated whether the Labour Party expects that after this war either Great Britain or the rest of Europe west of the Soviet Union will be living under the basic institutions of capitalism or not; but it seems to be implied, though not stated, that in Great Britain at any rate the capitalist system will still be with us. There are, of course, trenchant references to the need for common ownership of the basic industries and services; but there are also passages which appear to contemplate the continuance of a large-scale capitalism against which it will be necessary to protect both the smaller employers and the workers, both at home and in colonial territories.

There is, indeed, an insistence that the controls established under new conditions must be kept on, and not lifted when the war is over. But *what* controls? The Labour Party can hardly be supposed to mean that after the war we are to let the great capitalists go on controlling materials and industries as they are largely controlling them now. Such control is bad enough in wartime, when war needs must determine many issues of policy. It would be entirely intolerable in time of peace. On this point, no doubt the draftsmen of the report agree with us. But they do not say so, and in failing to say so they miss in our opinion the most important point of all. The entire character of the reconstruction that will be practicable after the war will be conditioned by what is done during the war. If we leave Big Business in the saddle for the time being, we may be sure that, even if it does not lose us the war, it will, when victory comes, be able to impose its veto on reconstruction policies which run counter to its interests. If we cannot discipline it now to our needs, under the powerful impetus of war conditions, what chance will there be of disciplining it in the hour of victory?

This criticism exemplifies the general fault we have to find with the Labour Party's outlook, as revealed in this document. Its portfolio is too full of post-dated cheques. The draftsmen may answer that their mandate was to draw up plans for the new society, and not to suggest a wartime strategy or policy for the party. But can the two be divorced? If it is agreed that they cannot, and the plea is made that it would be contrary to the conditions of political truce and to the Labour Party's obligations as a constituent element of the Government to make any proposal for beginning reconstruction now, we feel entitled to answer that, though certain Labour leaders are in the Government, the Labour Party Executive is not, and that it has the duty of giving a lead not only in matters of post-war policy and not only in matters of wartime policy, but also in relation to the close and inescapable connection between the two. Even in the matter of social reform, as distinct from change in the basis of social organisation, a bird in the hand is worth a great many in the post-war bush. Now, during the war, is the time for developing and reforming the social services, laying the foundations for a new system of local and regional government, and showing by example, and not merely by precept, how we interpret the requirements of the democracy for which we are doing battle.

It may seem harsh criticism to say these things about a manifesto of which the main sentiments are thoroughly sound, and the expression excellent. But they have to be said, if we are not again to be led together up the garden path. Nor can we feel altogether happy about the report on its international side. There is, indeed, an insistence in it that "international peace very largely depends on the understanding we reach, before victory, with our Allies, and, above all, with the Soviet Union and the United States." But this, if we mistake not, is very nearly the only reference to the Soviet Union throughout the report. At any rate, we can find no other reference of any significance, and none at all in the sections which deal with the new régime in Europe. This is surely a strange silence of the Socialist party of Great Britain towards the one great country where Socialism is in power. Apparently the Labour Party contemplates in the building of the new society no *special* relationship between itself, if it holds political power, and the rulers of the Soviet Union; nor, when it is insisting on the need for a new international order to ensure peace and promote prosperity, and on the reconcilability of such an order with the claims of nationalism, does it put in a word to suggest what part the Soviet Union may play in the creation of the new society in Europe.

It is of a piece with this silence that the references to the international settlement deal much more with the need for rebuilding a more vital League of Nations and establishing collective security than with the new social order on which these institutions are to rest. True, the report states that "as the Axis governments begin to crumble, widespread revolution is certain in the countries which they now dominate." But this statement is not followed by any assertion of the need to secure that these revolutions shall seat Socialism in power, but by a statement about the rights of self-determination which includes no reference to Socialism in any form.

Possibly these silences will be broken when the

Labour Party proceeds from an interim to a definitive formulation of its policy. But it is also possible that they are eloquent silences—eloquent of the fact that the party, despite its brave phrases about the new society, has hardly yet begun to realise just how new that society is destined to be, or through how intense a struggle—not only against Hitler—it will have to be achieved. To paint a picture of a Britain broadening out towards the four freedoms, of a Europe miraculously establishing, on a basis of Wilsonian self-determination, a new and bloodless international order—the old League made new and bright, and of the struggle between Capitalism and Socialism being then resumed much where it was suspended in 1939, is surely wishful thinking, and not merely the cobbler sticking to his last. We hope we are wrong, and that the fine phrases indicate a real understanding of the new needs. But we are not too hopeful that more has been done than a gentle shove in the right direction by a skilled draftsman who is able to carry his party leaders further in phrases than he knows they are in fact prepared to go.

THE THREE HITCHES

"The War is conducted from day to day and in its future outlook by the Chiefs of the Staffs."
—*Prime Minister*, Feb. 25th.

SCENE.—A secluded place. Enter First Sea Lord, Chief of Imperial General Staff, Chief of Air Staff.

First Sea Lord :
When shall we three meet again ?
Chief of Air Staff :
When my master-plan is plain.
Chief of Imperial General Staff :
When the hurlyburly's on,
When the battle's lost and won.
All :
Foul is fair and fair is foul,
Commons rage and critics howl.
First Sea Lord :
Chiefs of Staff, each plays his hand.
Chief of Air Staff :
I for air.
Chief of Imperial General Staff :
And I for land.
All :
Each by both the others crossed,
Though our bark cannot be lost
Yet it may be tempest-tossed.
Hurry, hurry, toil and flurry,
Muddle, bother, fuss and worry !
First Sea Lord :
Ships are mine !
Chief of Air Staff :
And planes are mine !
Chief of Imperial General Staff :
Army movements I design.
First Sea Lord :
Two to me and none to you.
Chief of Air Staff :
I'll do, I'll do and I'll do.
All :
A plan ! A plan ! All hail ! All hail !
It has no head, it has no tail.
Hurry, hurry, toil and flurry,
Fuss and bother. We should worry !

SAGITTARIUS

VOLUNTEER INTO CONSCRIPT

WE have been translated . . . into Conscripts. Unpaid conscripts at that. We, that is most of the old hands, have decided to remain and continue to do whatever we are allowed to do because eighteen months has bred loyalty to the unit and to each other. It is not devotion to the Home Guard *qua* Home Guard.

Ours is an urban unit. When we were still L.D.V.s, equipped with hope and armbands, we lived in a former bordel overlooking a main line terminus. That its ground landlord was also the Church afforded us a certain perverse pleasure. It was amusing to be called out of the Guard Room at one a.m. and find couples in search of temporary accommodation hammering on the door—quite a common occurrence. The place was dank, slimy and icily cold with the chill of the tomb. The C.O. bought oil stoves out of his own pocket to mitigate the moisture which condensed on the walls. He also bought electric radiators, kettles, crockery—anything to improve the lot of his "Braves."

Our first excitements were simple ones. Tin hats, demin overalls, Springfield rifles . . . tokens that we were being taken seriously by Whitehall. The local street arabs had other views. They saw strange sights. A happily heterogeneous assembly of generals, cooks, knights, lawyers, taxi-drivers, civil servants, butlers, burglars, porters, company directors, actors and ex-proconsuls doubling up and down terraces in their civilian gas-masks. We drilled hard, we learned all we could, we accepted guards, fatigues, even police duties, and hoped that we were being useful. Once, when we found ourselves chasing alleged parachutists at night, armed with truncheons, while the police detailed for the same job carried firearms, we considered that an element of incongruity had crept in . . . but it was all in the night's work.

Most of us were old soldiers. Not professional soldiers, but Kitchener men and ex-Territorials. We had smelt powder. We felt that the Home Guard was something we had dreamed of but never considered possible, namely, soldiering without militarism. Some sections of the Press called us a People's Army, and for a short, happy time that is what we were. That is what we were when the blitz came down and we lived laborious and unhealthy nights. A night in one's own bed was a luxury, but who cared ? The C.O. lived permanently at H.Q. and spent his nights afoot among the bomb craters.

In those days no one dreamt of evading guard or picquet duties. It was not uncommon to find that the numbers asked for were exceeded by volunteers who refused to go home.

But while we were feeling happy, terrified and useful by turns, the Blimps crept up behind and above us. "Mark my words," said the C.O., "they will use the Home Guard as a stable for their superannuated war horses." And they did.

Staffs grew and multiplied. Staff officers visited our bordel. They were drawn from two sources. Ex-Regular officers either insufficiently *bien vus* or too decrepit for Regular employment, and busybodies in search of a decoration.

One day we were surprised to learn that there was a demand for Commissions to be granted to Home Guard officers. It originated, said the Press, from the Home Guard itself. If it did, and in our unit it most certainly did not, it originated from ex-Regular sources or from those officers of the last war who had never ceased to regret the honorary gentility conferred by the possession of such a document. Every unit in the country has had its experience of such gentry. They usually wear badges and insignia to which they are not entitled, hoping to be mistaken for Army officers, and they avoid locals frequented by their men. We had some of that kidney, but they made the error of trying to have the C.O. removed on the grounds that he had not commanded infantry in the last war. For conspiracy they were sacked, and the unit rejoiced to a man.

This insistence on a commission brought about a marked deterioration in the quality of leadership. Anyone could hold or discard a Temporary Appointment and revert to the ranks without stigma. The greater permanency implied by the Commission scared off the more conscientious Volunteer. It is reasonable to suppose that the men in the bigger jobs in civil life are those with more character and less time to spare. Commissions were snapped up, on the other hand, even intrigued for, by men of lesser calibre.

The Blitz subsided. Came battledress, automatic weapons, box respirators and other delights, but with them a sinister and ever mounting pile of paper. It was an ominous phenomenon. The Staff were in the saddle.

They exhibited all the vices and few of the virtues of the Staff we had suffered on the Somme in 1916. They were totally incapable of understanding that men who do a day's work in offices or factories are not available for odd jobs like men living in barracks. They could not understand that wives are important in Home Guard affairs. They were wholly indifferent to the comfort of the individual. Luckily for us the C.O. was not. He never expected any man to do anything he was not prepared to do himself.

We left our bordel just before the fat Marshal blew off its upper chambers and went to a large drill hall, where we practised a form of bayonet drill which was doubtless very practical on the field of Waterloo.

Outdoor parades were fewer because they made heavier demands on the ingenuity of the officers. By degrees, as equipment and amenities improved, the spirit of the unit deteriorated. The young entry were definitely casual about guard duties. The more conscientious elders suffered for their delinquencies. Many youngsters joined the unit because their girls refused to "walk out" with them unless they acquired a uniform. That problem was solved by making the issue of battledress dependent on passing an efficiency test.

The absence of immediate danger, added to a series of unnecessary pinpricks, transformed us from a happy few, a band of brothers, into a gang of grousers.

Now the War Office has, unilaterally, broken its solemn engagement with the volunteer. It was not content with strangling the trained band spirit. In order to avoid "invidious distinctions," in the future we cease to become volunteers and become privates. The stigma of eighteen months' voluntary service will thus be graciously expunged from the record.

The C.O., whom we honoured and trusted, has reverted to the ranks. He is succeeded by a colourless clerk who has never heard a shot fired in anger. Our Zone Commander, a distinguished soldier who won our respect by a complete disregard of danger during the worst of the Blitz, is replaced by a gong hunter who cannot frame the simplest order with accuracy. During the worst of the Blitz he was plagued for more steel helmets. His answer deserves to be recorded.

"Why this fuss ? You know as well as I do that the value of a tin hat is purely psychological."

We could have resigned, or transferred to A.R.P. But resignation would have meant handing in our precious kit and well-worn boots. We feel that we may as well hang on. The C.O. has asked us to. We remember the spirit of 1940 and hope that another emergency will revive it. But we shall not forget how it was killed stone dead by War Office stupidity.

If invasion comes we shall probably be butchered by incompetent leadership, but we may kill a few Huns first.

"317"

A LONDON DIARY

General Wavell's transfer from the Far East to India marks a decisive stage in the White Man's history. For centuries now adventurers, traders, missionaries and soldiers of Portugal, Spain, Holland, France, Britain and the United States have jostled and fought for the riches of the East; for the last century the victors have had their way. We have now been turned out by a conqueror far more cruel but also far more thorough. The future of the Far East will not be one of White Man's Empire. If Asia is to have a tolerable future, it must be shaped by some combination of China, Russia, India.

* * *

Whites can no longer talk with any effect to Burmese, Malayans and Indians. If you want to know why, read, as I have been doing during the last few weeks, some of the history which most British people only know as a romance of conquest, but which is seared deep in all its crude reality, as I know well from conversation with Burmese and others, into the minds of the people over whom we have ruled. You know about the sacred figures with their scores of precious stones, whom our conquering heroes have raped from the eastern temples. Have you read, as a matter of fact, the memoirs of Lord Elgin, who burned the summer palace at Pekin? Have you against such background thought of the difficulty that confronts the British official who is told to do propaganda in the Far East? He knows about the corruption and weakness and exploitation of coloured man by coloured man, but he has no effective White case which will interest the exploited. How are Westerners who care disinterestedly about Asia to be heard and play their part? That it is possible for white men still to do so is proved by the attitude of complete equality, the knowledge and the beauty of *Asia*. Of all the papers that now come to me from different countries, I know of none so exciting, so hopeful and of so high a standard of writing and culture as this New York publication.

* * *

As a useful aid to clear thinking about forces and things as they are, I recommend thoughtful consideration of the trial at Riom. Here the former chiefs of the diseased French democracy—dead of a sickness certainly not confined to France alone—are on trial by those temporarily fed upon the disease itself. Everything about the trial is as false as Bonnet, as pathetic as Blum, as complex as the operations of the European steel cartel, and as squalid as Goebbels. Daladier and Blum, principal defendants, have been forbidden access to essential evidence for their defence. Daladier tries to demonstrate from memory that the fault for unpreparedness lay not with the Government, but with the Army High Command. But meantime the prosecution, too, is deprived of its most telling strokes, because it must all the time be looking over its shoulder towards Herr Abetz in Paris and the grim watchers in Berlin. The Nazi Press, for instance, complains that the prosecution is accusing Daladier of not being ready for war, whereas, in the eyes of Germany, his real crime is that he went to war at all. Vichy tries to prove that Daladier did not act with sufficient "firmness" against the French workers and other "popular" enemies of the forces now represented at Vichy. Daladier ripostes with boasting of how he broke the General Strike. And other equally grim watchers in the factories of occupied and unoccupied France reflect that in their eyes his real crime was precisely his refusal to release the healthy, heroic forces of the people against the enemy already well entrenched within the gate at the moment when, for instance, the Government felt compelled to agree to deprive its potential allies in Spain of arms against the Axis invaders. And, finally, just to complete the picture, one is acutely aware that the whole trial is itself an incident in the larger international struggle, so that every report about it has to be most carefully doctored before it can even be released by the Vichy censorship.

* * *

In this connection, I see that *France Libre*, in its current number publishes some material which has a profound bearing not only upon the trial at Riom, but also, perhaps, upon our own situation to-day. It is a quotation—published, I believe, for the first time now in this country—from an article written last year for the *Militaerwochenblatt* by General Liebmann, then of the German General Staff. General Liebmann, reflecting on the causes of the German victory in the West in 1940, frankly asserts that allied armaments during the months of the "phoney" war were not, as a matter of fact, so inferior to the German that the allies could not then have attacked with the possibility of victory. He says that the French tanks, for instance, were in some respects actually superior to the German. It was faith in the new weapons and new methods of war that was lacking, declares General Liebmann. "The opportunity of breaking through the German front in the West at the moment when the mass of the Reichswehr was fighting in Poland was allowed to pass—or, rather, such an eventuality was not even envisaged." I am not surprised that even the *Times* this week has been drawing attention to the dangers of a purely defensive attitude, and to the urgency of Litvinov's appeal for offensive action in the West while the battle in Russia is at its height.

* * *

Like many other people who have been at times exasperated by Mr. Garvin, I much regret his departure from the *Observer*. It was a wickedly mischievous paper during the Abyssinian and Spanish wars; Garvin has a lot to answer for in misleading the public when it most needed to be taught the meaning of the League. To-day I suppose Mr. Garvin might understand that the League was, amongst other things, a way of defending and transforming the French and British Empires which could not be defended unless they were so transformed. And also, like other people, I have been exasperated at times by Mr. Garvin's extremely adjectival style. Yet I am very sorry to see him go. He has represented for years an independent and individual type of journalism now increasingly rare. He writes rather as he speaks; that is, the torrent flows from an immense storehouse of words and images. He is a terrific talker. People forget that he was once secretary to Parnell, and that it was not until Parnell's death that his loyalty, always his greatest virtue, was transferred to Joseph Chamberlain, whose biography, by the way, I hope he is going to finish. I am glad that there has been no pretence that he is retiring on account of age, ill-health or what-not. He leaves the *Observer* because the Astors and he no longer agree on public issues.

* * *

Sir Stafford Cripps promises to scotch the waste now to be seen at dog races and boxing matches. A reader who lives near Altcar sends an example of hare-coursing. He gives a singularly disagreeable account of half-tame hares being chased by dogs, screaming while they make their last desperate turns and then being torn to death. He adds:

> Apart from local noblemen a large proportion of the supporters are farmers of the gentleman type, exempted from military service and running big cars, no doubt on the allowance of petrol granted to them as producers of foodstuffs. One could almost say that they are completely immunised from the effects of the war, excepting, perhaps, that their bank balances are somewhat swollen.

I happened to remark to one of these sporting gentry that it must be a problem to provide food for so many dogs, to which he replied it was certainly more difficult than before the war, particularly so with brandy, which together with the whites of eggs forms a most suitable diet for dogs in training. Without blushing he gave me an approximate canine menu for the day. This included the gravy from stewed beef steak, Benger's Food, tinned chickens' breasts, and new laid eggs whisked with port wine. All this, to say nothing of the hares which are sacrificed.

* * *

Who said this was a National Government with an equal share for the Labour Party? Who said that things would be all different after the war, that we were to have a better social order, freedom from want and fear? Well, as a sample of the sincerity of all this, note the fact that the Labour Party officially produces a reconstruction programme and the B.B.C. does not even mention it and pleads, when challenged, that it is only an interim report! If the Conservative Party made an interim decision about the objects of the war and their plans for the future, would that be passed over by the B.B.C.? "Polite poppycock," says the *Daily Herald*, drawing it mild. Mr. Brendan Bracken will no doubt put some sort of face on it in the House of Commons. But who is really responsible? Not, I am told, the Ministry. Is it the Chairman of the B.B.C., or some lesser official? The suppression becomes the more absurd because our foreign publicity people have been telling the world about the reconstruction programme to prove that we are not fighting for pluto-democracy. And now Goebbels, noting the B.B.C.'s silence in England, naturally quotes it as a final proof of British hypocrisy. Critic

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to P. A.-L. Popham.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

The Council of the Lord's Day Observance Society therefore once more appeal to the Governors of the B.B.C. that these Radio Plays should be withdrawn; and they do so the more urgently in the present hour of National need, when the favour of Almighty God is of supreme importance.

—Advt. in *The Times*.

No one has a grudge on the cause for which our ironwork and railings are being removed. But the barbaric way in which they are being brought down with two-handed sledge hammers has caused much resentment.—Letter in *Daily Sketch*.

We are the one human breed that has proved it can control others without cruelty, without oppression, without the destruction of liberty.—*Efficiency Magazine*.

Desponders should be realist for a moment and ask whether a people that has benefited by at least four unearned deliverances is not probably intended to come through.—Letter in *Daily Telegraph*.

Japanese bombers overhead sound just as unpleasant to the poor Chinese and Indians as do Nazi raiders to people in Britain. The actual bombing is just as alarming, probably more so in these flimsy brick and timber buildings.—*The Glasgow Herald*.

JAPANESE ORIENTATION
II

None understood better than the real rulers of Japan the Jesuitical precept that the seeds of adult conduct are sown in youth. Loyalty to the Emperor has therefore been exalted into a regular cult. The Emperor's photograph hangs in every school in the country, and the children and teachers are required to bow before it daily. On many occasions persons have been known to sacrifice their lives in the effort to save these portraits from destruction by fire, and such deeds are extolled as worthy of profound admiration. The language used in print, when referring to the Emperor and the Imperial Family or to anything directly or remotely connected therewith, is fulsome to a degree of which the West has no conception.

Certainly, the militaristic oligarchy whose members are the real rulers of Japan have never lacked human raw material from which to fashion the almost perfect fighting machine. They have been quick to appreciate the dynamic potentialities of the Japanese tendency to go to extremes, when skilfully exploited, although they are also uneasily aware of the dangerous possibilities lurking in it, should hostile forces ever succeed in gaining the upper hand. For that reason the authorities have always acted promptly and ruthlessly in suppressing at their source all premonitory symptoms of so-called "dangerous thoughts." Any public advocacy of socialism, however academic in tone, is rigidly and mercilessly put down. I recall the case of the then Minister of Education, Mr. Yukio Ozaki, who in 1898 had to resign his post simply because, in the course of a speech and in order to illustrate an argument, he imagined Japan as a republic.

The task of adapting the time-honoured traditional warrior spirit of the nation to modern war conditions has not been difficult. The same physical and mental qualities which in feudal Japan rendered the Japanese the best swordsmen, bowmen and wrestlers in the world has since made them skilful and fearless wielders of modern weapons. It is common knowledge that for her navy Japan has taken the British as her model, and for her army, the German. In my own opinion, gradually formed during some twenty years' close personal contact with the men who constitute the backbone of Japan's fighting services, the Japanese soldier is far superior to the German in physical courage and individual initiative, and therefore excels in the very branch of warfare wherein the German is probably weakest, *i.e.*, hand-to-hand fighting. The national arts of Judo (Jiujitsu) and Kendo (fencing), sedulously practised by the student class, provide an inexhaustible cadre upon which to draw for military leadership. There is, however, more in it than that. During my own close study of the art of Judo in Tokyo I made a singular discovery, the cultivation of abdominal force among Japanese teachers of Judo and Kendo more particularly. Perhaps the most distinguished exemplar of this esoteric almost occult power in my day was a certain Kunishigé, then a sturdy veteran of sixty-seven, who could easily overpower opponents half his age, and perform numerous other feats which defied a normal explanation. He himself frankly ascribed them to his development of abdominal power. The source of this power is supposed to be the *tanden* or gall-bladder, and development is effected by systematic deep-breathing exercises during which the neophyte squats facing the rising sun. In this position the lower abdomen or *shita-hara* is steadily inflated and deflated in a carefully prescribed manner. Many Japanese veteran swordsmen and wrestlers are undoubtedly endowed with powers so much above the ordinary as to render their possessors more than a match for several less-skilled opponents. I remember the case of a certain veteran master of fence who, when walking along the Ginza, in Tokyo, was accidentally charged by a young man in a hurry, with the result that the young man rebounded from the veteran's stomach as from a stone wall and fell into the gutter, while the veteran pursued his walk entirely unruffled. My own teacher Kunishigé with his little finger could push over an 18-stone wrestler, one of the so-called *sumo-tori*, professional mat-men of vast bulk and colossal strength. Armed only with an iron fan he could defeat an opponent wielding a double-handed sword. The application of this abdominal force is often accompanied by a special kind of shout called the "*ki-ai*" (literally "spirit-meeting"), also supposed to emanate from the region of the *tanden*. It is affirmed that in the old days masters of the *ki-ai* could produce the most amazing phenomena. It is told of one illustrious adept that by means of the *ki-ai* he was able to bring down a bird on the wing, and then in the same manner revive it. Another noted swordsman opposed to an adversary of weaker calibre could at will vanish from the latter's sight, leaving him confronted by the semblance of three trenchant Masamuné blades, only one of which would be real. Then at the right moment, with the fatal brand the adept would neatly cleave his victim's skull in twain with the devastating stroke yclept "*nashi-waré*" or "pear-splitter." And so such tales might be multiplied almost indefinitely; their name is legion. Perhaps some of them are the fruit of fantasy and a lively imagination. Nevertheless, having myself seen my old teacher Kunishigé check a severe nasal hemorrhage in a boy patient by three successive passes accompanied by the *ki-ai*, and restore to life a coolie with a broken neck after orthodox doctors had given him up for lost, I am not quite so sceptical as otherwise I might have been.

In no other country known to me is esotericism so widely developed as in Japan, in association with the arts and crafts. The word "*goku-i*" is in constant use in this context. Nearly every teacher of Judo, Kendo, swimming, archery, etc., has some jealously guarded secret throw, thrust, blow or stroke which he will impart only to the favoured few who show unusual promise. How, for example, do we account for the ability of many Japanese swimmers to dive from a great height, hit the surface of the water with their chests without submerging or sustaining any pain or injury from the impact? I have seen an expert tread water in such wise that he appeared to be walking along the bottom, the water reaching no higher than his waist, and in that position he would write on a slate and fire a gun. During the hot summer months Japanese students thought nothing of swimming all day, sometimes from Tokyo to Yokohama, a distance of quite twenty miles.

I have been assured that in feudal days it was the assiduous cultivation of abdominal power, the development of the so-called *shita-hara*, from early years that gave the samurai the almost incredible degree of physical and mental fortitude required to perform the dreadful rite of *hara-kiri*, more elegantly *seppuku*, rendered still more terrifying to common mortals by the elaborate and sinister ceremonial with which it was invested.

It would, of course, be a mistake to suppose that masters of the kind described above are anything but the exception even in Japan; but the point I wish to emphasise is that from such men and their many pupils are recruited the officer class or caste who set the exalted standard of martial prowess to which the humblest private would fain aspire.

E. J. Harrison

PETTY

Mr. Noel F. Hall, now at the British Embassy in Washington, has been telling an American audience that at the time of the air raids "it was not the bombs so much as petty annoyances caused by lack of such prosaic things as clean shirts and hairpins that were found most damaging to British morale." "We prepared," he went on, "too many hospitals for serious cases, too many shrouds and too many graveyard sites. We had not prepared sufficiently to give to large numbers of people, whose clothes had been rendered temporarily useless, clean shirts or shoes or warm clothing, or to give womenfolk combs, hairpins, face-towels and cooking utensils to replace those rendered temporarily useless by dust and dirt. It is much easier to be bombed than to be bored."

I am not sure that I agree with Mr. Hall in his concluding pronouncement on human nature. I myself have none of this preference of bombing to boredom. I have occasionally been bored at a party in peacetime at which most of the guests seemed to be animated corpses, but never among them have I felt more than a passive unhappiness. I ask myself whether, even at the most boring dinner-party which dragged on for what seemed hour after hour, I should have felt more cheerful if the conversation had been repeatedly interrupted by the crunch of bombs falling in the neighbourhood; and I cannot help thinking that, however boring the conversation may have been, I should have found it less annoying than a bombardment by bombs. The saying that "it is much easier to be bombed than to be bored" certainly does not apply to me.

It is not that I am abnormally insensitive to boredom. Robert Louis Stevenson once told William Archer that he had never been bored in his life. I, on the contrary, have again and again been bored to such a point that I became as lifeless as a boxer who has just been given the knock-out. If I had had a friend present who would have thrown in the towel, I should have felt indebted to him for life. The physical symptom of boredom in me, I am told, is that I turn green. I am like a boy who has smoked his first cigar and feels that there are worse things than death. Strangers who have insisted on telling me about the complicated politics of some foreign country have often, noticing the change in my complexion, anxiously said to me: "Are you feeling ill?" I always say "No," but a rasping noise goes on in my brain, like the noise of a self-starter that fails to start, and I all but lose consciousness as I listen to the story of the villainies of Stobarovich and how Tomsonock had been driven out of the country by enemies who had taken bribes from Braunstein. It is not that foreign politics do not interest me. Up to a point they even fascinate me. But a succession of unusual names stuns the consciousness.

Probably, in such cases, it is the voice, even more than the names, that produces the boredom. There is a kind of flat voice, unknown outside the human species in the animal kingdom, which, even in the service of truth, makes the listener long for the easy-going modulations of a man who enjoys telling lies. There are people who dislike the mechanical-toy noises made by guinea-fowl, but these are soothing to the ear in comparison with the noises made by many good people for whose opinions we have a great respect, but who express them with a mournful monotony that one feels will last for ever. At the same time, even the effects of the worst voice-production seem to me preferable to the effects of bombing. I, for one, would rather be bored than bombed.

As for what Mr. Hall calls petty annoyances—such as the lack of clean shirts and hairpins—it is extremely difficult to say when an annoyance is petty. Whistler, when living in Chelsea towards the end of his life, tried to put a stop to building operations next door on the ground that the perpetual clinking of trowels made it impossible for him to paint. Obviously, to him, the sound of trowels was not a petty, but a great, annoyance. I once felt irritation of the same magnitude when I lived in a flat and the people overhead played the piano all night and danced breakdowns to its music on the floor. I do not say that it was as bad as bombs, but, as bombs were unknown in those days, it seemed illimitably exasperating. Other people have found the noise of a trombone played by a neighbour unendurable. Yet others have complained of the crowing of cocks, and in recent years, of gramophones and wireless sets. Neighbours with wireless sets seem always to turn on the wrong programmes. Petty annoyance? Perhaps, but it did not seem so in the years before the war.

Even in wartime, however, it is not easy to distinguish between a petty and a major annoyance. Is it a petty or a major annoyance, for example, when I go out in the evening to close the sliding door of the hen-coop and, on hearing my footsteps on the grass, one gluttonous Light Sussex hops out and is followed by her sisters, hoping for food that I do not possess, and compels me to return to the house and spend half-an-hour waiting till I am sure the hen-house is asleep? It may seem petty to some, but in me it arouses an unreasonable hatred of that particular wakeful hen. Night after night, when the hens have disappeared into their perches, I approach their sleeping-quarters with the caution of a Red Indian; but always one optimistic hen hears me and leads a procession into the waking world again. Every time this happens I feel as resentful as if the universe had inflicted on me a personal injustice. One can get used to cats behaving selfishly, but not to poultry.

As for the so-called petty annoyances of life, they have undoubtedly grown in number as a result of the war. First there was the annoyance of not getting the brand of cigarettes one liked: then came the worse annoyance of not being able to get any cigarettes at all. It was the same with whisky: there were places where to get a small glass of it from under the counter became a compliment. Rationings of all kinds of things, however, which in peacetime would have put a strain on the nerves, gradually became tolerable. Annoyances that would have seemed major a few years ago—over the difficulty of getting matches, pre-war marmalade, lemons, petrol and so forth—were discovered after all to be petty. We were not nearly so much annoyed as we should have expected to be. There is a relativity in annoyances as in other things; and we found that in the circumstances we did not much care.

To-day there is a number of annoyances, once bitterly complained about, which we are happily spared. No longer are our neighbours allowed to whistle for taxis at all hours of the night. No longer are we rung up on the telephone to urge us to buy the perfect vacuum cleaner. No longer do church bells jangle our nerves on Sundays and even on week-days as they used to do. (In theory I have a Christmas-card feeling for church bells, but in practice I find as little pleasure in listening to most of their dreadful music as in listening to a cinema-organ.) Again, we are free from the annoyance that used to be caused by dangerous-looking men who waylaid us in the dark and tried in husky voices to persuade us to buy enormous plants in pots too heavy to carry home. Many people, too, feel that the world is a better place since the postman has ceased to drop through the letterbox moneylenders' circulars offering a loan of anything up to £5,000 without security. The younger generation may see nothing annoying in so generous an offer; but I have seen elderly Victorians go apoplectic with indignation as they thrust the circulars into the waste-paper basket. I could never understand this indignation, but undoubtedly there are people who regard the receipt of almost any circular through the post as a personal injustice inflicted on them by a vindictive Providence.

I sometimes suspect that many people like being annoyed. Certainly they are annoyed by things that annoyed nobody in the great ages of the past. The lack of clean shirts, for instance; Dr. Johnson would have borne that with equanimity. Even a hundred and fifty years ago it is doubtful whether a shortage of soap would have disturbed many British householders. We have come, however, in recent years to regard many luxuries as necessaries, so that women to-day would be harrowed by the disappearance of cosmetics which their grandmothers never even wanted. Such luxuries as tea and tobacco were unknown in the world that produced the *Agamemnon* and the *Apology of Socrates*; yet we who can write nothing on this level feel as much aggrieved by their temporary absence as if they were necessary for human existence. Annoyance, it seems to me, is mainly a psychological matter. It is born of the imagination, and, in ninety-nine cases in a hundred, is unrelated to reality. In this it is different from the sensation of being bombed, which is produced by a hard fact. At the same time, there may be some virtue in cultivating petty annoyances. They distract our minds from worse troubles, and provide an endless theme for light heart-to-heart conversation. Y.Y.

THE C.O. IN GAOL

[Since the National Service (No. 1) Act, 1941, became law, over 620 conscientious objectors have been sent to gaol for refusal of medical examination. Of that number more than 180 have been sentenced to as much as a year's imprisonment.]

LUCKIER than many in the time and place of my summons, I was given a mere three months' hard labour. (It should perhaps be explained at once that "hard labour" differs nowadays from ordinary imprisonment only in that you sleep—or try to sleep—without a mattress for the first fortnight.) Unless there are quite exceptional circumstances in the case, three months is the shortest sentence you can reasonably expect to receive for the offence of refusing medical examination. Also, I served my time in what is considered by those experienced in the matter to be a *good* prison—meaning a prison where the majority of the officers are more concerned with seeing that the routine works fairly smoothly than in detecting minor breaches of the regulations by which the prisoner's life is hedged. I suffered, in fact, from little worse than the boredom inseparable from the extreme monotony of the existence, and, that being so, I feel a sort of guilt, almost, in offering my impressions. Not that anyone should make light of the depressing effect of all that the comprehensive term of boredom includes—of separation from one's friends and from almost everything else that raises mere existence to the level of life—or, indeed, of confinement itself. But many conscientious objectors undoubtedly have had far worse experiences, even in this war, than I had.

Shortly before I went to prison, there was an agitation in some quarters for the granting to conscientious objectors of the rights of political prisoners, who are allowed, for instance, to wear their own clothes. On the face of it, there could be no fairer demand, but I had not been in prison 48 hours before I realised that the agitation, however well-meant, was ill-advised. The inescapable fact is that every conscientious objector starts his prison life with the handicap of his offence. That a man's convictions should be strong enough to land him in gaol goes for nothing in the estimation of most prison officers; after all, if one is a prison officer it seems the most natural thing in the world for an assortment of men of various shapes and sizes and dialects to land in gaol every week-day evening. Pacifists can hardly expect to be popular, anywhere, in war-time, and broad-mindedness is not the first qualification looked for in prison officials. And then there is a belief (quite unfounded on facts, and indeed contradicted by them) that conscientious objectors don't work so well as other prisoners.

The granting of privileges to conscientious objectors would only intensify the rather vague but fairly general dislike of their kind felt by prison officers. For a conscientious objector to have a tolerable existence in gaol, it behoves him to show as soon and as often as possible that he can "take it" as cheerfully as the forger or the chicken-stealer or the bigamist. And make no mistake about it, the gaoled conscientious objectors are not asking for privileges, or sympathy, or anything except that they may be released from the futility of prison existence as soon as possible.

"And what about the attitude of the other prisoners to conscientious objectors?" people ask me. It is not a question which can be answered very briefly. Some prisoners, of course, understand the conscientious objector's position; the great majority do not. It is important to remember that "conscientious" is a long and difficult word, standing for a complicated ethical idea. To the average prisoner a "conchy" is simply someone who does not want to go into the Army. "Why don't you join up, mate?" an ex-soldier will say: "Not a bad open-air sort of life, you know!" There was one warder who was in the habit of being mildly sarcastic at the expense of conscientious objectors whenever he found an opening. Once, when a friend of mine was the victim, another prisoner overheard the conversation. As soon as the warder's back was turned, he went up to my friend. "Don't mind *him*," he said, "he's always like that with C.O.'s. He's one himself at heart, too; scared stiff he might have to go into the Army, he is." There was no malice in his words, which were an expression of heartfelt sympathy with my friend's supposed discomfiture.

I have seen it stated that one of the worst features of the prison system is the way in which the enforced celibacy drives the sexual instincts to find abnormal outlet. In penal servitude prisons things may be different, for all I know, but in the county gaol any unconventional behaviour which may exist hardly appears on the surface, and in general conversation, at least, the part played by sex is quite negligible. (The observations of other prisoners with whom I discussed this fully corroborated mine.) The topic which *is* of overwhelming importance and interest, for practically every prisoner, is food. The quality of the prison food which I met was not too bad; there were even one or two meals on the weekly menu to which one got to look forward a couple of days in advance. And no doubt the quantity is sufficient for the preservation of normal health. But one is always hungry.

As a student of human nature, I found prison an encouraging experience. Prisoners are, above all, a good-tempered section of humanity; quarrels are rare, and in the workshops you do not seem to meet with those cases of temperamental incompatibility in two men which are generally to be numbered among the discomforts of the factory or office. The most surprising thing of all in my experience, however, concerned the realm not of morals but of aesthetics. A famous orchestra was staying in the neighbourhood, and one Sunday afternoon towards the end of my sentence a small party of its members came to play to the assembled prison. During the usual prison concert (staged, as a rule, by those admirable people, the Salvation Army) the proceedings are attended by a constant, although illicit, undercurrent of conversation. But this was different. We were treated to Schubert and Beethoven, and I have never known a quieter or more obviously appreciative audience anywhere, or heard fine music well played given more genuine applause. This was as unexpected by the authorities as it was by myself; to them there may even have seemed something suspicious about it. Anyhow the next day the chaplain did a round of interviewing to find out prisoners' candid opinions of the entertainment—with the result that something similar is to be arranged whenever possible.

C. O.

FROM "A TWENTIETH-CENTURY PSALTER"

TO-DAY the rift, the flaw
In our human law
Lets the animal in.
The dripping jaw, the thin
Snout, the furry foot,
Mark the triumphant brute.

Hard sentences of old
Grown customary and cold,
No longer are a sword
Of sharp and holy word
To hold the ravening beast
From his unhungry feast.

The waters in a heap
Once stood that we might keep
Dryshod upon the path
Between the seas of wrath.
The wilderness of rocks
Turned its ungrateful locks,
Reluctant to obey
On that Platonic day.

Yes, Plato and the old
Prophets who made the mould
And left the rift, the flaw
In our human law;
For all they were so bold,
Not he nor they foresaw
The snout, the dripping jaw,
The bleeding soul, the brute,
The flight and the pursuit.

The animal in man,
From which we first began,
Now drives us one by one
From the symbolic sun;
Now herds us in the Cave
Where miming shadows gave
A travesty of truth
In our racial youth,
Before our ears had heard
The Typifying Word
That bade us lift our eyes
And read in abstract skies
The signature of Light,
And the defeat of Night.

RICHARD CHURCH

THE MOVIES

"General Suvorov," at the Tatler.
"Shadow of the Thin Man," at the Empire.
"Dive Bomber," at the Regal.
"America at War," March of Time.
"What a Man!" at London Pavilion.

The whole camp rung with joy; you would have thought
That they were going to a marriage feast . . .
There was not now a luggage-boy but sought
Danger and spoil with ardour much increased;
And why? Because a little—odd—old man,
Stript to his shirt, was come to lead the van.

These lines from *Don Juan*, quoted in the Tatler programme, set the key for Pudovkin's and Doller's film of *Suvorov*. It starts with a victory piece. After battle the "little odd old man" without wig or uniform addresses his soldiers on the field, paces up and down, waves his stick, darts everywhere picking heroes and slamming into asses: it is a long opening scene, leisurely like the rest of the film, but replete with character and the tiny incidents that contain drama. Suvorov himself, incisive, quick, changeable like an orator, diving from eloquence to buffoonery, is splendidly played by an actor new to me, N. Cherkasov, and holds the imagination even when he is off the screen. But though Suvorov is the centre, he is never spotlit; his officers and soldiers, his enemies at court, the remnant who follow him into exile, are presented in the same key of realism. Every scene is crowded without disorder. The film is a sort of chronicle-play of Suvorov's last years, beginning with his disgrace under Paul and ending with smashing victories against the French in Italy and withdrawal over the Alps. The phases of that retreat, made desperate by betrayal, are intensely moving, sombre and dramatic like the scenery; and the moments in which Suvorov wins over his army to attempt an impossible attack overshadow the battle that follows. The relation between the old general and his men, the bullying affection, the looks of adoration or glee that come over the soldiers' faces as he runs along their ranks, give one a new understanding of the battlefield, like the scenes of a later campaign in *War and Peace*. Pudovkin's technique in this film follows recent Soviet habits of realism; slow cutting and long episodes have succeeded to the quick-fire of silent days. Perhaps because I don't understand Russian, the Pudovkin talkie seems to me still some way behind the position he had reached with *Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg*. But he can make the screen look larger than anyone else.

Shadow of the Thin Man. Myrna Loy in her old form and best looks, Powell as the only tolerable detective hero in fiction, Asta on the end of one string, seeking new lamp-posts, and Nick junior on the end of another. Three murders. Two cocktails before lunch. Racing in the afternoon, all-in wrestling after dinner. First-rate.

Dive Bomber. Better than *Captains of the Clouds*. Two hours with the U.S. naval air arm in colour. Less night-life and jealousy than usual. But the characters (male) all growl at one another, and only the details of stratosphere flying and tests for black-out raises this above other films of the kind. Good performances by Errol Flynn, Ralph Bellamy and Fred MacMurray.

America at War. New March of Time. Rather disappointing, though only by the standards already set by this brilliant and varied monthly of the screen. Much of the material has been seen before, and the parallel with 1917 is stressed with quotations from the comparatively recent *Ramparts We Watch*. But it is more than a rehash; tone and timing effective, like a good broadcast from America.

What a Man! A W. C. Field's film whose chief aim seems to be to bring out young Miss Gloria Jean as a budding Deanna. Rarely has a great comedian been dumped in surroundings less helpful. There are funny moments, and a wild car chase at the end, but sentimental streaks and witless fantasy almost kill the fun.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

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PLAYS AND PICTURES

Water-Colour Drawings at Agnew's.
Civil Defence Artists at Cooling's.

The 69th annual exhibition of water-colours at Agnew's includes a group of thirty-four by de Wint, most of which possess charm. The view of *Dover Priory* has a spaciousness that places it among his finest achievements, but even sketches so slight as *Fishing* and *The Quiet Stream* reveal great certainty in spacing. A Samuel Palmer, though late, is very rich, and a Bonington, though midget, is very telling. The Cotman of Harmonville is a model of architectural draughtsmanship. The modern contributions disappoint, except for a couple of Wilson Steers.

The fourth exhibition of the Civil Defence Artists reveals a further improvement. *Trafalgar Square at Dusk*, by R. M. Dennison, and *Lord Mayor's Show*, by Charles Dunn, are among the most interesting Sunday pictures the C.D.A. have produced. Other works specially worth attention are by C. W. R. Nevinson, William Scott, Kenneth Martin, Basil Rorke, Derek Rogers, A. E. Webster, H. du Plessis, G. L. Frost, Ann Anderson, E. M. Marshall, V. Cuningham, G. Behrend and H. E. Jones. Marek Zulawski works brilliantly in the style of Bonnard, L. Rosoman disappointingly in that of Modigliani.

"Tales of Hoffmann," at the Strand Theatre.

Mr. George Kirsta has tried to improve the *Tales* by adding a prologue, introducing dances to divert the eye during the arias, and adding a slab of *La Belle Hélène*. We see no objection to such attempts, but this particular experiment is not very happy. Mr. Kirsta outrages too boldly our sense of period, making Hoffmann and Offenbach meet as contemporaries. Offenbach, in fact, looks older than Hoffmann, whereas he was only three when Hoffmann died. Indeed, the æsthetic failure of the *Tales* as an opera, despite its melodious and dramatic virtues, is that the characteristically Second Empire composer could not suggest the eerie romanticism of the earlier period to which Hoffmann belongs. Mr. Kirsta, who has evidently studied his Bérard, makes stylish romantic settings, but even these are spoiled by the incursion of dancers dressed, in the fashion of the modern symphonic ballet, in combinations relieved by a wisp of drapery or fishnet. Nothing, indeed, is in keeping, for the *Belle Hélène* music is different in texture from that of the *Tales*. Nevertheless, the eye is more gratified than the ear by this entertainment. The dancers are young, beautiful and skilful, while the singing, especially of the men, is inadequate. The best feature of the show is Mr. Esmé Percy's performance. His performance with a harp is a delight, and he even makes a wonderful success of Franz's song in the third act. The whole show, it is fair to add, was received with enthusiasm.

"Volpone," at the St. James's.

Mr. Donald Wolfit ends his season of Shakespeare with a week of Jonson. (The last performance of *Volpone* will be on Saturday.) In a graceful little speech after the performance he adapted a line from the Epilogue and asked English audiences not to turn down the Fox. Strange that our best stage satirist should need recommending, but since it is so, Mr. Wolfit seems the actor for the task. He is probably more at home as Volpone than in any Shakespeare role except Richard II or Falstaff. The hammering verse, the encyclopædic prose, the revelation of monstrous passions, suit him down to the ground. His Fox is a splendid creation, with a vitality that stinks. The hiss when he is cornered, the final howl as everything crashes down, are eerie—and would be even more terrifying with an audience that thrilled to Jonson as it does to Shakespeare. At the moment, let's admit it, Londoners are rather intermittently thrilled than swept away. But Mr. Wolfit and his company (Frank Thorton provides a handsome and disdainful Mosca) are making converts every day, and next time they come to London perhaps Jonson will be higher on the bill.

Correspondence

PRODUCTION

SIR,—Having read of late some very interesting letters and articles in your journal on the subject of war production, I should like to add my contribution, which is probably insignificant, but which has I think the merit of being from a different viewpoint from any of the others. I belong to that much derided class of industrial workers known as Ratefixers, and our job, stated bluntly, is to find the correct incentive for maximum production. In theory we should be an impartial body standing between the management and the operators, and setting a fair price on each job on its own particular merits. The fact that at the moment many of us cannot do this is but a symptom of the disease which is rampant in our factories. In practice the cash incentive to production has failed completely and I should like to set down my own opinions as to why this has happened.

In the first place management is faced with a new and to them almost impossible task in their control of labour. Having relied for years on the crude sanction of the sack and all that it meant to the operator to enforce discipline in the factories, they are now faced with a new situation. First, the apparently inexhaustible supply of surplus labour who would put up with almost anything for a job has disappeared, and secondly the Government has imposed restrictions on the movement of labour.

Thus being deprived of their iron rod, they fell back on to the use of bribery to maintain their labour strength. For the firms manufacturing new products, noticeably aircraft, this was not a very serious step. Their costs were guaranteed by the Government, and so we find the irresponsible inflation of labour costs in this industry, which in some respects has grown to be a public scandal. Whether this policy was adopted merely to attract labour, or whether it was part of a more sinister attempt to inflate their own returns on a cost basis I cannot say. All I can say is that it is killing production, because we find that men can now earn what is to them an adequate wage in three days, and are prepared to go slow for the rest of the week.

Now let us look at the other end of the scale, that is to those firms whose commodities are old-established, and whose prices were fixed on the open market. If these firms are going to show a profit they cannot increase their labour costs to the new standards. Thus we find that the rates paid to the operators come nowhere near the new incentive rates as set by the newer industries. Men will work on these older jobs only under protest. They know they cannot possibly earn an adequate wage on piece-work and so are paid a day-rate. And so it is all the same to them whether they produce 300 or 3,000 components a week, and naturally they produce 300.

You can blame them if you wish, but you have to see their viewpoint. For one thing they are not in my experience in the least impressed by Government propaganda and by the pep talks broadcast by our leaders. There have been exceptions when production has been boosted by an inspiring piece of propaganda, but ordinarily this is not so. I wish I could convey to you the arguments and ideas of these men and girls when they are discussing production and money.

For one thing they are convinced that the management are making tremendous profits, and they want their share. A learned economist could talk to them of super tax and E.P.T. until he was blue in the face. They would still believe it. Again they see on every hand instances of inefficiency, corruption and nepotism in management, and I assure you that there is enough in this one place alone to fill anyone with disgust.

But I think that the failure of the cash incentive is but another symptom of the bigger issue which is more political in its nature. The operators have been trained on a cash standard which has failed, and no one has yet given them anything with which to replace it. In the voluntary units, such as the Home Guard and Civil Defence, men have found a higher reward than money for their labour, but not in the factories. Perhaps it is merely the atmosphere of a factory that prevents this new spirit of service from breaking out there. But I think it is also that both management and operators are only visualising a return to the old system as it was before the war. The management obviously are; for to them it was a good system. And the operators are because they can see no other. Everywhere they are reminded that this period of independence is but temporary. In this factory the management has its own private Gestapo, and men are being marked down for summary treatment after the war. All the operator can see after the war is a return to the old ways, which to many of them means merely a return to the queue outside the labour exchange. Can you then wonder at their determination to get what they can while they can, and since the system fails in most instances to give it to them, they have fallen into a condition of sullen non-co-operation.

In my opinion, there are two alternative solutions. First by direct coercion of the operators by prosecution and imprisonment, surely undesirable in view of what we are fighting against; and secondly by a clear statement of our war aims in a positive sense. Fighting to prevent Nazi overlordship and all that it means may be a powerful incentive to those who have the imagination to see what it would entail, but I feel that we need something more positive than that. We need a definite plan laid down, worked out and put into operation that will kill for ever the feeling of insecurity and fear of the after-war years that does exist in the minds of many of our men.

And more immediately we need a cleaning out of our factories, and a system substituted where efficiency and capability are the only criterions of management.

Then, and then only, will we be able to offer the operator a higher reward for his labour than the filthy cash and coercion standards which have rotted the minds of us all in the past and are clogging the wheels of production in our present necessity.

Birmingham. J. A.

STALIN'S POLICY

SIR,—No one, it seems to me, not even the editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION, has realised, or at any rate admitted, the importance of M. Stalin's Order of the Day to the Red Army. It is a statement of Russia's war aims. Russia intends to reconquer her frontiers of 1941. A likely result of Russian victories will be, M. Stalin thinks, the ousting of Hitler and his crew; but the ousting of Hitler is not a Russian war aim. On the contrary, her frontiers reconquered, Russia will be ready to make peace with whatever German government happens to be in power. Not one word is said about " new orders," " European reconstruction," or things of that sort; neither is M. Stalin concerned with the ideals and ambitions of others: all he insists on is restitution of Russian territory. This is the policy one would expect from that sagacious autocrat who inherits the place and power of Peter the Great and Catherine. Let us hope the British and American Governments have taken note of it. CLIVE BELL

[Stalin's "Order of the Day" was, as we said, a serious warning to this country and the U.S.A. It was reinforced by Litvinov's speech. We do not regard it as a statement of policy in the sense implied by Mr. Bell. It is a retort to those whose notion is that Russia wins the war for us and then combines with us to destroy Germany.—ED., "*N.S. & N.*"]

THE "DAILY WORKER"

SIR,—*Time and Tide* has attacked several newspapers including the *Daily Herald* and the *New Statesman and Nation* for the crime of criticising the Government, and the *London News*, organ of the London Labour Party, has suddenly let loose a long tirade chockful of quotations, against the suppressed *Daily Worker*. *Picture Post* is fighting against a partial ban on export, and shop stewards are up in arms against revised by-laws which completely prohibit the distribution of literature, including trade union journals,

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JONATHAN CAPE

in protected places. Somebody seems to be very busy treading on one of the " Four Freedoms."

How unfortunate that Transport House should choose this moment in order to publish its proposals for post-war reconstruction, which include the demand for the fulfilment of " freedom of speech and expression." And lest you think that this freedom is to be postponed until after the war, there is Professor Laski to tell us that the Interim Report is " a programme of action for to-day and not of promises for to-morrow."

Why is Transport House so afraid of the *Daily Worker* ? And what does it hope to gain out of a Battle of Quotations referring to two years ago? Two can play that game. It was not the Communist Party which published a pamphlet denouncing Premier Stalin as a " despot " and " gangster." The anonymous author of the *London News* article, demonstrating the art of selectivity in quotations, should have remembered Finland.

How much longer is this ban nonsense to go on? This week the shop stewards of the two largest arms factories in London have passed resolutions calling on the reconstructed Government to lift the ban in the interests of war production. The *London News* answers with a string of two-year-old quotations and the melodramatic accusation that the *Daily Worker* stabbed in the back the cause for which Russia is fighting. What perversity and vindictiveness!

The folly of the Cripps expulsion has now been brought home to the leaders of the Labour Party. How long will it take them to realise the folly of the continued ban on the *Daily Worker* ? This time the people are not shrugging their shoulders, they are demanding " freedom of speech and expression " as an essential part of the win-the-war policy that they now expect from the Government.

WILLIAM RUST,
(Former Editor).

NURSING NONSENSE

SIR,—I am a nurse in training in a big London hospital and in common with other members of the staff here I wish to make a protest in the pages of your paper against the recent efforts of the Royal College of Nursing to pass a ruling whereby nurses are to be graded according to the standard of their education.

Thus a nurse who has not reached matriculation standard at school would be excluded from any position higher than that of staff nurse. I feel very strongly—and remember I am voicing this opinion of very many nurses—that this ruling should not be allowed to come into force, and to back up this opinion I would like to give you some facts about the nursing world, concerning which a good deal of bunk is talked and written.

People speak of the " noble career of nursing " without fully realising just what sacrifices it does entail. Nursing is a peculiar and most necessary work. Despite modern science diseases will spring up, people will fall down and fracture bones, men will get drunk and conclude arguments with blows, and, above all, nations will go to war and blow each other to pieces (or try to!). Someone has to care for the unfortunate victims of these accidents, and this demands no small amount of patience, skill and coolness. Nurses are often accused of being hard. It is only relative hardness because they see every day death, illness and sorrow and tragedy. No nurse could feel deeply for every case that passes through her hands. It would be impossible to live and work at such an emotional pitch. Also many of the things one does become uninteresting from sheer repetition. Aesop has said that familiarity breeds contempt. Remember also that use breeds indifference. Nursing, then, demands one's life. It is easy to say nurses must have outside interests. During training there is heavy work to be done in the wards and much study to be got through in off-duty time. One's off duty is frequently changed and sometimes given up, and after four years of this sort of thing it is surprising how outside interests decrease. The majority of women take up nursing because they like it. It is not work one can do easily if one really feels out of sympathy with one's patients and fellow-nurses.

The point I want to stress particularly here is that nursing is a working democracy. Every junior probationer is potentially a matron. There is a tendency to give preference to nurses trained in the big voluntary hospitals. But I have found, and people who have been nursing for many years have agreed with me, that a really good nurse may come from any hospital, from any class of society—she remains a good nurse and is worth her weight in gold.

To attempt to exclude women from the higher positions in hospitals simply on account of their educational standard is obviously silly and grossly unjust. The matriculation is a University entrance examination and not a standard of nursing ability. I have ventured to put the point to some of our most senior sisters here and find they are all of the opinion that good nurses may be trained—but not made.

NURSE

RELIGION IN THE SERVICES

SIR,—The comment, in the 28th ult. issue, on Church Parade in an R.A.F. unit, and the airman receiving 28 days' detention for refusing to enter the church building, reminds me of the erroneous impression, that a soldier, etc., can refuse to enter a church; this is not so. Every airman, soldier and sailor, if he states on enlistment that he holds a religious belief, is bound by the regulations to attend any church parade and enter the fabric.

We must not blame the O.C., he is only carrying out his orders, the fault lies in the Chaplains Corps; this organisation is, to say the least, redundant in these modern times, with its huge tanks, death-dealing dive bombers, chemical warfare, and other paraphernalia of civilisation, and 2,000 years of Christianity.

I have spent the best years of my youth and early manhood in the Army, and have attended thousands of these compulsory church parades in peace and war, at home and abroad, and to say the least, I always felt uncomfortable. In my early twenties I used to ask myself what kind of a religion it was that had to use compulsion.

However, I am pleased to report that the Government, to its credit, has placed an alternative to the forces. Any recruit on attestation may register as an atheist, agnostic, or rationalist, the recruiting officer is expected to point this out to the man on enlistment. Further, any officer or man may change his religion, or from a religion to atheist, etc., through the usual channels of his unit.

I hope your readers will make this generally known, there should be no more twenty-eight days' detention for failing to bolster up religion by compulsion.

31, Lord Street, GEORGE BURGESS
Blackpool.

DOCUMENTARIES

SIR,—Whitebait's review of Cavalcanti's *Film and Reality* invites more comment than your space permits. This is no time or place to explain the real social purpose (ignored in Cavalcanti's film) behind the 1929–39 years of British documentary films, but no war excuse can allow to stand uncorrected Whitebait's fantastic claim that " the tradition that has produced them (recent M.O.I. documentary films) owes more, perhaps, to Cavalcanti than to any other man." No greater respect than mine can Cavalcanti ask for his aesthetic and technical influence on our films; yet the fact remains, and I regret that it has so soon been mislaid, that one man and one man only, John Grierson, was responsible for the birth and inspiration of the 300-odd British documentary films made between 1929 and 1939, including those of which Cavalcanti was himself director. Without Grierson's vision, unselfishness and unceasing work, there would be no trained documentary film experience upon which official films to-day can draw. That he is now the power behind Canada's considerable film effort is no reason to forget that his ideas and training are still the mainspring of all British documentary films to-day worth mention.

PAUL ROTHA

Cliffords Inn, E.C.4

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

To every writer his legend. Byron's hoof, Nerval's lobster, De Quincey's Ann, Mr. W. H., Dr. Johnson's orange-peel and Marston's raw steaks, the toga donned by Flaubert for certain passages of *Madame Bovary*, the cork lining that ensured for posterity Proust's labyrinthine clauses: such talismans, dramatically lit, would provide the basement of a new Tussaud's. *By these means*, the catalogue would point out, *some famous authors have written extraordinary books, and satisfied a fancy, their own or other people's, hardly less extraordinary. Look round and wonder.*

Not all the exhibits, of course, are important; we can imagine a *Filles du Feu* apart from chained lobsters, and it doesn't much matter what Marston ate to bring on dreams; but a general *malaise* is reflected. The curious visitor might pause over Whitman's butterfly. Strange, perhaps he may think, to find here relics of that "friendly and flowing savage"; and what more natural, apparently, than that Whitman, friend of the grass and winds, should have been photographed in old age with a butterfly? He holds it up on his forefinger, like a lovebird, and gazes gigantically out of his forest of white hair; a similar hand with a butterfly had once floated on the contents page of *Leaves of Grass* (exhibit 2). Whitman's own words (exhibit 3) about the portrait appear alongside: "I've always had the knack of attracting birds and butterflies and other wild critters; they know that I like 'em and won't hurt 'em, and so they come." But this butterfly came easier than most, for here it is (exhibit 4), recently found in an old folder and made of cardboard with a wire loop attached. The visitor, passing on to Baudelaire's *toilette de guillotine*, may begin to wonder where common grassland ends and artificial paradise begins.

Many butterflies, innumerable pasteboard fictions, have gone to make up the Whitman legend. I remember being struck years ago, long before I read a life of Whitman, by the disparity of his photographs. At different ages he appeared to be different men. The sheepy dandy of twenty-one was succeeded by the bemused and full-lipped Christ of thirty-five; two years later, with the same slant head and swimming eyes, there emerged a romantic traveller of Stevensonian mould; more years, and youthful elegance had vanished, to be replaced by broad dignity and a workman's suit with floppy collar and tie. At forty-five Whitman was an old man, tired, weather-beaten, cunning and simple like an old tramp. It seems the end; but there is still the final phase to come—real old age, energetic, Biblical, magnificent in looks. This assortment of Whitmans puzzled me; mutable though his writing was, it showed little alteration or growth, and I found it impossible to fit the poetry and the photographic record together. I didn't try, because *Leaves of Grass* with its first flush and cooling-off seemed sufficient. It is only lately that interest in Whitman, in the self behind *Song of Myself*, has made me turn to his biographers. They reveal—in an increasing degree as more and more evidence comes to light—a story of single-mindedness and subterfuge extravagantly mixed. No one who was not uniquely single-minded could have created out of himself at the age of thirty-three, could have *forged* (as Chatterton forged Rowley), a poet complete with a set of poems that appeared to spring from nowhere. No one but a master of subterfuge could have kept up the forgery the rest of his life, walking about in daylight and challenging a whole continent.

That, more or less is what Whitman did. His duplicity staggers. He was a fine poet and a charlatan. He dressed meticulously for his part of the natural man, yet natural feeling was there. He gives us personal truth ("Camerado, this is no book, Who touches this touches a man"), and it is crammed with lies. He ventriloquises with his male "barbaric yawp" from a nature more than half feminine. The legend of his life includes the pretence of literary innocence, a scattering of imaginary bastards, reviews and interviews written by himself, death endlessly anticipated in farewells and a tomb previously inscribed. It was stage-managed with gusto, with the conviction springing from emotional necessity. Even biographies written as recently as 1926 accept as fact love episodes and mystical revelations which Whitman perhaps needed but never experienced. He assumed, out of a retarded maturity, a whole world before it came to him—women, poetry, religion; when (and if) they came, the all-important first flush was gone. The line dividing poetic search from feigned experience is broken down, and poem after poem crosses from one side to the other. The immense windy energy, the suspect or indifferent detail of so much of his chanting, are due, I think, chiefly to this. It is often extremely difficult to say what he feels and what is only guessed at, when he drops from imagination into lying, how far self-deception releases fantasies valuable in themselves, whether in fact at a particular moment Whitman is being natural or tricky, or both, since trickiness is part of his nature.

This uncertain world of sliding and dubious values finds a counterpart in the form of Whitman's poetry. Between verse and prose, half-rhapsody, half-manifesto, it enables him to duck when need be, to slip away and return, without our noticing. Very often the poem is not so much a poem as an aura round the idea of a poem, given a glow of personal expansion. We know, of course, in general when Whitman, so to speak, is all there; again and again in *Song of Myself*, in *Out of the Cradle Rocking Endlessly*, *By Blue Ontario's Shore*, the Lincoln elegy. Here unquestionably, by a sort of cellular growth, Whitman's scattered imagination achieves a unity.

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre for the highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlours of heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery . . .

The virtue of such passages is as obvious as the lapses into self-parody:

> I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious.

But some poems in *Leaves of Grass* and much of the later writings (I should make an exception of the prose pieces about Nature) exist in a half-world peculiarly Whitman's, when he is not writing but enumerating, and we like or dislike it, rate it high or low, in the degree to which we are fascinated by Whitman. He has, with a pen, something of the personal magnetism which apparently was his striking characteristic as a man; even when writing badly he makes his presence felt. A fine passage, too, will often be enhanced by a gesture indicating what the author is after. Whitman's characterisations of his poetry and its motives are remarkable. "These recitatives," "the words of my book nothing, the drift of it everything," "Not God, is greater to one than oneself is, And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own funeral dresst in his shroud," "Logic and sermons never convince, The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul": such sign-posts are curiously sharp after the blur of many pages in which catalogues and emotions superimpose badly like a cheap colour-plate.

One of Whitman's tests of poetry (he had others, wide of the mark) was to read it out-of-doors, as he lay in an orchard, or walked through woods or on the seashore. The seashore, indeed, where as a boy he had chanted Shakespeare and the Book of Job, had so imprinted itself on his mind that it became the theatre and sounding-board of his "recitatives." Mr. Hugh I'Anson Fausset in his *Walt Whitman** quotes a passage in which Whitman describes his verse-form as being "apparently lawless, but on closer examination a certain regularity appears, like the recurrence, of lesser and larger waves on the seashore, rolling without intermission, and fitfully rising and falling." And he says of his language: "I take a good deal of trouble with words . . . but what I am after is the content, not the music of words. Perhaps the music happens—it does no harm: I do not go in search of it." No, but the reader may.

Mr. Fausset himself, in the course of his book, quietly insinuates a number of good and exact definitions of Whitman. The "capacity for diffusing himself sympathetically" over so wide a field is set down to the feminine elements in his nature. Of Whitman's self-proclamation he writes:

> There was something sublime in his egoism as well as something false. It made him want to be independent of the traditional literary channels in meeting his audience. Just as he had set up and printed much of his book himself, so he wanted to thrust it, as it were, directly into the reader's hands.

And this is acutely observed:

> His ego in a peculiar way *had* preserved its virginity through all the contacts it had made with other people's thoughts as with their persons. Ubiquitous and all-pervasive, it caressed the body of life and the thoughts of men and even embraced them with exuberant "amativeness." But the union was never quite consummated. It could not be because of the conflict [between masculine and feminine] in himself. Despite the moments when he bathed his body in the ocean of life the split in his personality remains. And so he had to create the illusion of a unity which he had failed to achieve inwardly by collecting into his verse everything in the universe that he could lay hands on

As a statement of the strength and weakness in Whitman's elastic sympathy this could hardly be improved on. Mr. Fausset gives what seems to me a very true and balanced picture; if he has a fault it is that he underrates Whitman as a rogue, and sometimes judges by the standards of Christian idealism when psychological exactness would be fitter. There is still a good deal to be disentangled in the fantasy-life of this poet whose genuineness, like the medium's, is reinforced by the fact that he has so often to "put it on." Also, he deliberately threw his poems into the future, and any criticism of him should take into account his amazingly diverse influences on later writing. Hopkins, for example, was touched (see passages in the Letters and the Nature diary); and so at the other end of the scale was Gauguin (*Private Journals*, with the refrain "This is not a book"). Was Whitman a great poet? Yes, if impact and influence go for anything. Was he a great democrat? That is a far more difficult question to answer. The sub-title of Mr. Fausset's Life is "Poet of Democracy," but the question of Whitman's camerado politics would take another article.

G. W. STONIER

A RUSSIAN WIT

The Wonderful Dog and Other Tales. By MICHAEL ZOSHCHENKO. Translated by ELISAVETA FEN. *Methuen.* 7s. 6d.

This is the second volume of Zoshchenko's stories to be translated into English. So slight an art, like the more sentimental ejaculations of Saroyan, might easily have been exhausted very quickly; but in this volume there is no sign of tiredness. That nervous, eager, bothered voice, so full of official hopes and of unofficial despairs too many to be remembered, goes on like a cheap-jack's, indescribably jaded, yet ineffably convinced that every item is a bargain. Zoshchenko's gift as a story-teller is the gift of making every line a surprise, and the happy part of it is that he manages to appear as surprised as the reader. He generally surprises by fulfilling expectations temporarily suppressed: the expectation that "something is bound to go wrong," i.e., he surprises us with the banality of circumstance. I do not know whether we like him because, as Miss Elisaveta Fen suggests in her introduction, there is a resemblance between the Russian and English senses of humour. Zoshchenko's humour, I would have said, is too naif, too egoistic and often too bizarre and cruel to be assimilated into our tradition. I rather think that what we feel for the role he plays in these stories is affection. And also we are greedy for an unofficial picture of Russian life, one which takes lightly what everywhere else has been taken with oppressive solemnity and partisan wrath. There is still in England a repugnance to swallowing the official view on any subject all day long, and Zoshchenko has the attraction of letting the air in on past history. If Miss Fen means that we are constitutionally tickled by the low-down on life, as long as it is expressed with good nature, and that the Russians have the same taste, she is, of course, right in her parallel. We have liked all foreigners who gave us the low-down. *Gil Blas*, though now unread, was once the most popular novel in England and did more to start our own comic tradition than any other book.

---

* *Walt Whitman.* By Hugh I'Anson Fausset. Cape. 12s. 6d.

Putting these speculations aside, we must admit that Zoshchenko's success with us is the result of technical ability. His anecdotes are always more than anecdotes, his more complex stories are deflated to the size of anecdotes. He does away with descriptive matter, even descriptions of people, altogether. His aim is to catch the muddle of life. For example, a dumb girl is mysteriously healed by a quack. An awkward subject. How are you going to take it? Seriously, sceptically, piously, analytically, satirically, in the more-things-on-heaven-and-earth-Horatio manner which is the conventional English approach? Zoshchenko takes it all ways at once, puts it to you as a phenomenon which is grotesque, pathetic, urgent, scientifically ridiculous and in the end banal, a piece of life itself. He catches you with your mouth open, as if you'd just read the garbled story in the paper:

> And then, a common man, without even a secondary school education, and in his soul, perhaps, a son of a bitch and a rogue, steps in, takes a look at the girl with his pop eyes, turns over a thought or two in his head—and there you have a healthy creature instead of a hopeless invalid.

Yes, the quack cures her. He gives her a whack with an ordinary bath towel and she talks. She's a bit queer in the head but she talks. It takes a considerable artist not to improve on a subject like that.

Some of Zoshchenko's stories have a sting in the tale—the brilliant one about the four actors who were mistaken for a single impersonator is an example—but in general they bear out the truth of that very shrewd remark made by Mr. H. E. Bates in his recent book on the short story, that it is much more important in the anecdote to have a sting at the beginning. Zoshchenko's stories go from sting to sting and quite often he throws the story away carelessly at the end. Look at some of these beginnings:

> I saw a young fellow smashing a bottle in the street the other day.
>
> I'm feeling rather depressed to-day, Comrades. A dog's upset me.
>
> Some firewood was stolen in the yard of our house.

or political indignation, a favourite gambit:

> There are too many thieves about, citizens. Stealing and pinching goes on without discrimination.

You are pricked to attention at once. And knowing your Zoshchenko you know there will be a surprise in the next line and the next, even if it is only bathos. In bathos he is an expert. He disjoints life. It is rather like sitting in an old-fashioned tram which jerks you half out of your seat on to your neighbour's lap and in two seconds you are in a scene or a situation with people to whom you had never intended saying a word. You are bundled into unguarded familiarity. Here's a woman dentist asking a milkwoman to find her a husband, there's a man who's wretched because he's won a prize in a lottery; here's a poor old man whose wife won't let him die because he hasn't saved enough money for his funeral—this is the best story in the book, I think—there's a man making a mess of some propaganda about aviation and persuading people, by mistake, that aeroplanes are useless and awful; here's a group of admiring ignoramuses seeing a dictaphone for the first time and delighted because it records their swear words. Zoshchenko goes for the awkward gaps in human harmony, for the place where the buttons don't meet. Here's the propaganda, there's the reality. Sometimes—here's the reality, there's the propaganda. He is fascinated and appalled by human ignorance. He drops banalities like flat irons into the aspirations of the soul and yet, with an enthusiastic clumsiness which is both cunning and affecting, he spends quite a lot of time trying to fish some of those flat irons out. The remarkable thing is that considering his passion for the incongruities in low life and, worse still, domestic life, he is never vulgar. His eye has always one harassed, last-minute stare at something beyond man's stupidities, that last-minute look you see on the faces of skaters at the moment of losing their balance.

Zoshchenko is a café writer. He is made for the papers. You forget as fast as you read. He can tell a story in fewer words than any living writer and yet get several planes of meaning in. I wish that Miss Elisaveta Fen had given us more information about him, about his place among his contemporaries, about the dates of his stories, his relations with the regime and so on. For he has hit upon something apparently careless, absurdly personal, and misleadingly slight, which no one else, not even in the congenial American environment, has hit upon: and he is one of the most intimate historians of Russian domestic habits during the last twenty years to have been published over here.

V. S. PRITCHETT

LORD ELTON OR THE INTELLECT

Saint George or the Dragon. By LORD ELTON. *Collins.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

In his new book Lord Elton sets out to diagnose the faults of our society, and to prescribe the ideals that should govern our future policies. With much that he says it is easy to agree. While fearing an increase of bureaucracy, he favours the substitution of public corporations for large, privately owned industries. Employees have little incentive to work well for shareholders, and, moreover "the community might reasonably have expected to obtain, and often has obtained, services as valuable as Lord Nuffield's for an insignificant fraction of their reward." Compromise, however desirable in home affairs, has proved calamitous in foreign policy. Examinations are too important in our educational system. Civil Servants should have some direct experience of the fields they administer. To make men better off is merely a means; to make them better is an end.

This book, however, is no mere collection of respectable truths. Indeed its charm, I think, depends chiefly upon a youthful gusto for paradox. Lord Elton himself declares a Christian, calls for a revival of Christian education, and gives his book the sub-title "Towards a Christian Democracy." But subscribers to the Malvern Findings (of which oddly enough he makes no mention) may well find to their disappointment that Lord Elton's notion of Christianity is a little unusual. He blames the Church organisations for ignorantly urging opposition to Japanese aggression in Manchukuo. He commits himself to the pagan view that the military virtues are "the most fundamental" of virtues. How far he gives licence

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FREDERICK MULLER

to his whimsicality can be gauged from the following quotation:

> War, however much we may hate it, is still the supreme agent of the evolutionary process. Blind, brutal and destructive, it remains the final arbiter, the one test mankind has yet contrived of a nation's fitness to survive.

I believe this to be biologically false; I know it to be theologically damnable. Animals survive largely by either aggressiveness or cowardice, usually, I fancy, by a combination of these equally unchristian qualities. To apply such a test of fitness to human beings is anti-Christian, and leads logically to racial theories and totalitarian practice.

But often Lord Elton seems not so much paradoxical as muddle-headed. Thus he can write:

> Since in this war it is so clearly Christendom that is at stake, how can Britain hope for victory until it is a Christian country?

One might as well ask: "Since in this war it is so clearly Jewry that is at stake, how can Britain hope for victory until it is a Jewish country?" Similarly Lord Elton quotes with approval the following sentences about Christ:

> Either He was a raving lunatic of an unusually abominable type, or else He was, and is, precisely what He said. There is no middle way.

An educated Christian—or so I should previously have hoped—would blush to propound so disingenuous a dilemma, since he must know that some of the *logia* are thought by many biblical critics to be unauthentic.

Lord Elton's emotions become altogether too much for him, when he contemplates intellectuals, and particularly intellectuals of the Left. They have no courage, no experience of life. Sometimes he makes a shrewd hit, as when he points out that Blimp was often right, e.g., "We must have conscription if liberty is to survive." But more often his bias seems almost neurotic in its intensity, since it drives him into manifest inaccuracies. About some schools of contemporary art, for instance, he writes:

> It was usually possible to examine an exhibition of these schools without discovering, if one had not already known, whether they were products of England or Thibet, of the twentieth or the twelfth century.

I choose this example because it comes within my particular competence: having visited most such exhibitions during the last twenty years, I can promise Lord Elton that he is mistaken. (Thibetan art has had no influence, and I only wish that more modern artists could rise to the standard of the twelfth century.) With similar recklessness he talks of "the once conspicuously bellicose *littérateurs* of the Left who sought asylum in the United States after the outbreak of the European War for which they had clamoured." Of whom can he be thinking? I should be obliged if he would name one such individual.

Misreading or undervaluing the role of Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Elton seems to suppose that our current misfortunes are due to a failure not so much of intelligence as of character. For this failure he holds the intellectuals responsible. His estimate of their influence in this country is, I fear, more flattering than true. An innocent foreigner, picking up this book, might conclude that during the last ten years Mr. Brailsford had been Prime Minister, Mr. Kingsley Martin editor of the *Times*, and Mr. Laski Archbishop of Canterbury. At the least, he would presume that so severe a critic of our pre-war policies had been obdurate in opposition. How often in fact Lord Elton has spoken and voted against the Government I do not know; but all parties have made mistakes, and while the parliamentarians who supported our pre-war governments must find their past responsibility a painful burden, almost all can plume themselves on having been in opposition at some time during the last thirteen threatening years. Lord Elton would certainly condemn the type of politician, too common in France, that supports every government, regardless of party, with the undeviating loyalty of the Vicar of Bray.

Among other startling statements, we are informed that men are qualified for particular callings by an "ancestral memory" similar, Lord Elton suggests, to that which enables birds to build nests; and that owing to the British Commonwealth mankind experienced no major wars between 1815 and 1914. Such extravagances may be fairly harmless in themselves, but they suggest a mind ill-equipped to defend itself against more pernicious delusions. And in due course we find Lord Elton gaily launching into a dream of the future:

> In a world society whose huge central core was the British Commonwealth, the vital principle of which has been peaceful growth and change, it is most likely that an ascendant race-strain would be able to assert its superiority without violence, providing an increasing proportion of the administrators, the teachers, the political and industrial leaders of the vast community.

Thus our guide towards Christian Democracy ends by conducting us to a world dominated by racial superiority. In ordinary times the theorist is not expected to be a man of the world, and can indulge innocuously in such pleasing pipe-dreams. But in this crisis of our history one of the main obstacles to our success is the widespread fear of Anglo-Saxon domination. Our Russian and Chinese allies, the oppressed peoples of Europe, the Latin Americans, the Indians, the Africans and the Jews, may in their perversity find some analogy between Lord Elton's hopes and those of Dr. Goebbels. Since the errors in this book seem impetuous rather than Machiavellian, a few minutes' reflection may, one hopes, induce Lord Elton to disavow a statement that will alarm the statesman, divert the scientist and sadden the Christian.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

GREECE

Greece Against the Axis. By STANLEY CASSON. *Hamish Hamilton.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

At this time of the year in Greece the almond trees will be spreading their delicate clouds; in a few weeks the judas trees will be flaring on the slopes; the whole country will be born again into a clear, rich, intense, brilliant life. It was just about this time of the year twelve months ago—on March 12, to be exact—that Colonel Casson drove on reconnaissance bound from Athens over Kithairon and up the road that connects Attica and the Peloponnese with Thessaly and the north. Since his arrival in Greece in November he had been a member of the British military mission to the Greek Army; for the first five months of their war the Greeks fought, by their own wish, alone except for the support of the R.A.F., and it was only in March that British and Imperial troops began to arrive on the mainland. In March the entry of German divisions into Bulgaria brought matters to a head. Suddenly Eden and Dill were in Athens, conferring with the Greek leaders and with Wavell; the decision was taken to send troops; and Colonel Casson, transferred to the staff of our Expeditionary Force, was despatched on his preliminary reconnaissance to the Haliakmon and Mount Olympos areas.

Up to this point his book is that of a spectator of the war: he reports the approaches to the Italian Blitzkrieg, analyses the brilliant mountain tactics by which it was defeated, and sets on record the superb devotion of the Greek Army and the dignity of the people. From this point it becomes a personal narrative, or a series of impressions rather, of the preparations to meet the German attack and of the sad April campaign. (His experiences did not include the battle of Crete.) The middle of a war is no time to be

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writing precise military histories of that war, and Colonel Casson does not claim to do more than give a general account. It is for its feeling more than its details that his book is valuable. Often, indeed, he manages to trip over a fact: for instance, it was in March, not February, that the Italians attempted their last concentrated offensive in Albania: and I wonder how the inhabitants of, say, Preveza would receive the statement that "So effective was the air force assistance that the Italian air force never penetrated into Greece at all, except on certain rare occasions when they bombed Salonika and Larissa"? The map, too, is not always helpful. But the feeling of the book is right enough. It was spring when Colonel Casson drove north to spy out the land: spring, though the pass at Eleutherae, guardian of the frontier between Attica and Boeotia, was deep in snow at his return; and we are reminded as we read, those of us who know Greece at the turn of the year, of the blossoming trees and the storks and the soft, warm days. It was against this background of a countryside waking after the winter that the tragedy was played out: the defence of the frontier forts, immortal if defence ever was, and the Germans driving to cut off the lion-hearted Greek Army of Epirus, and the British and Imperial troops fighting their brave hopeless rearguard action from Olympos to the beaches of Attica and the Peloponnese. The Greeks had accepted their unequal contest against the Axis without self-pity; they had whipped the Italians, their unconquerable human dignity insisted that they must resist the Germans too, come what might; they did not complain when they were attacked, nor were they reproachful when their Allies were compelled to leave them. It is only now, perhaps, that we realise to what fate they were left. A non-industrial people, their labour was not worth much to the Nazis, so why should they be fed? In the country districts the people, bred to a frugal self-sufficiency, may struggle to keep alive; in the cities they starve, literally and terribly. We all recognise that we shall not find again the old Europe. In Greece the clear landscapes and the sun and the garlanded trees will be still waiting, we know; but we are beginning to fear lest, should the help this country is willing to send not come quickly, a generation of the people may no longer be there to share them with us. DILYS POWELL

ANYBODY'S WAR

The Wind is Rising. By H. M. TOMLINSON. *Hodder and Stoughton.* 5s.

Before Daybreak. By J. L. HODSON. *Gollancz.* 7s. 6d.

> September, 1940: London by night has become one of the world's prodigies. . . . Night, any night, is when the old capital of the British is apocalyptic, a vision not believable, though there it is, and there you are. The serration of its towers black against vivid eruptions, in which for a moment you see a familiar shape, as though to prove that it is London indeed in which you are, warrant the story that mankind is beginning another way of life. The apparitional entrance to a new age seems unpropitious, or at least very dangerous to those who would pass onward to the future.

> To-day I was given this visual description of a certain public man: "A hot steep," cruel, but damnably funny.
>
> I called on the Mayor of Dover, Mr. J. R. Cairns. I asked him how many of the people still here will remain and see the war through. He didn't profess to know that.
>
> Ros., who is swatting at Aberystwyth for her LL.B., and who was agitating a short while ago for permission to join the W.A.A.F.S., has now changed her allegiance to the W.R.N.S.
>
> The Temple has suffered more than once, and Grays Inn severely. It is now old news that the House of Commons and Westminster Abbey have been damaged. . . .

Pay your money and take your choice: Mr. Tomlinson's rising wind, or Mr. Hodson's flat calm; ersatz-Carlyle, or magnified Mr. Everybody; five shillings highly coloured, or seven-and-sixpence pretty plain.

The Wind is Rising is an excited and didactic book. Mr. Tomlinson sees the war as a revolt against "mechanicalism," as a kind of machine-breaking Nemesis to punish mankind for tampering with natural forces, instead of seeking the pastoral and utopian simplicities; and prophesies a vague but imminent renaissance in which industrialism will be overthrown and the peoples return to the land. This interpretation of events (which incidentally bears a striking resemblance to propaganda the Nazis are said to be spreading in the occupied countries) seems to have affected Mr. Tomlinson's style, and instead of the vigorous and vivid descriptions to which he owed his reputation, he employs a "poetic" brand of writing that is often merely a high-flown variety of prosiness. Clouds are no bigger than Viennese house-painters' hands; grisly heads of Hitlerism are uplifted like oriflammes; the Nazis, impelled by a dark weird, fly abroad like the rocs and monsters. And so on. Mr. Tomlinson has done better than this.

What is one to say about this procession of War Diaries? X tells us how a bomb broke his windows and destroyed his manuscripts; Y recounts his day-to-day reactions through the week of Dunkirk; Z, publishing in 1941, boldly prophesies the defeat in Norway and casts daring doubts on the morale of the French Army. The chief, indeed the only, justification of these books is that they accurately reflect common experience and are the raw material from which future histories will be constructed. Even if this is so, which is doubtful, for most of these diarists draw their material from a severely censored press, it is no justification for their publication to-day, when much of their material is common property. *Before Daybreak* has all the usual elements of its kind—the hero-worship of airmen ("I felt they are a race apart—a gulf between us. I feel an intruder when I ask questions of them"); the coy references to well-known men by their initials (H.G.W., V.G., N.C., etc.); the wise forebodings of subsequent disasters. But though Mr. Hodson shows most of the faults typical of his genre, he also displays its usual merits, and is swift, anecdotal and consistently entertaining. To anyone who has read carefully the newspapers of the past twelve months, *Before Daybreak* will have little new to say; to others it may serve as a pleasant and handy synopsis of a year's social history. JOHN MAIR

THE PROBLEM OF GERMANY

Shall Our Children Live or Die? By VICTOR GOLLANCZ. *Gollancz.* 2s. 6d.

Guilty Germans. By AUBREY DOUGLAS SMITH. *Gollancz.* 6s.

If Mr. Gollancz writes under the influence of strong emotion who should be surprised? The question, as he sees it, is whether another generation is to be fooled, whether this war is just another round in an endless dog fight between rival States, or whether it is indeed to be, what it is officially called, a war of liberation. Mr. Gollancz does not hide his view that the probable outcome of the war is an increase of hate, frustration and the preparation for future wars; he insists, rather perhaps too much with the emphasis of one who struggles against fearful odds, that there is still a way by which our children may be saved from a repetition of these horrors.

Mr. Gollancz and Mr. Douglas Smith have no difficulty in exposing the puerility of the Vansittart view that aggression is a peculiarly German vice; the story of innumerable French, British, Italian, Russian and Japanese aggressions is in itself enough to make hay of this historical nonsense. Mr. Douglas Smith's book is a thorough exposure; he has taken the trouble to rewrite the history of imperialism, and it becomes no more pleasant reading because Nazi and Japanese methods and ambitions are more ruthless and deliberate. We may disagree with Mr. Smith on this or that matter of detail or emphasis, but I shall be surprised if Lord Vansittart or any of his followers attempt any serious reply. There is no sociological basis for Vansittartism; it is, in fact, exactly as vulnerable as the racial doctrine of the Nazis. It is indeed the same doctrine reversed.

Mr. Douglas Smith's book is exactly the historical introduction to the subject which a group of W.E.A. or other students need. Here are historical facts to put against the shabbiest of historical pretences. Further, in both these books the student will find a sociological interpretation which it is his business to examine. Both writers hold, though not in a doctrinaire form, the thesis that modern wars are the outcome of imperial rivalries. They see in Vansittartism a dangerous attempt to divert attention from this, the real problem of our age.

But Mr. Gollancz does not stop at this point. He is that peculiarly British mixture, in sociology a Marxist, in sense of values a Liberal and a Christian. Marx only supplies an analysis: if there is to be progress as well as change, it lies in the growth of Christian ethics. Thus Mr. Gollancz pleads with passionate emphasis against the philosophy of hate that is growing in the world. Masochism and sadism are in some degree in all of us. They may be so utilised by Fascism—in Germany a complete generation seems to have been poisoned—that the hardly won tradition of civilisation which has developed from Judaea and Greece may be lost by Axis victory. This tradition, he says, "is as yet precarious; it has been nurtured with difficulty by the blood of martyrs and by innumerable tiny thoughts and acts of unknown men and women, and could easily be lost for generations or perhaps for ever." War, it may be replied, also threatens all the values of civilisation. But it need not destroy them if we direct it always towards liberating all those in society who cherish this tradition. If we forget our true objectives, we may be led (Mr. Gollancz has some surprising quotations) into declaring that all the Italian people are equally to blame with Mussolini, just as all the Germans, whether they've suffered in concentration camps or not, share with Hitler the responsisibility for this war.

The greatest evils of Vansittartism are first its effect in lengthening the war by destroying the possibility of political warfare designed to divide Germany, and, secondly, its effect on the minds of British people who might otherwise attend to the really difficult problem of Germany which will confront us after the war. Let Mr. Gollancz illustrate by a quotation from Britain's ambassador to Berlin, Lord D'Abernon. After pouring out torrents of hatred which deceived the common people into believing that we were once and for all destroying our enemy, our rulers so feared Communist revolution that they actually bolstered up the very military elements which we were pledged to destroy. We find Lord D'Abernon actually discussing whether the militarist gangs of Germany were more likely to make for order or for future trouble, and adding:

> "I consider the danger from the Left far exceeds the danger from the Right, and in the event of a new outbreak of Communism in Germany . . . these organisations would powerfully serve the cause of order."

How far is it true, as Mr. Gollancz suggests, that the motive hidden under the plea of punishing the wicked German is the fear of Communism in Europe? And if, with the advance of Russia, Communism looks more likely in Germany, how long will it be before those who were once appeasers and then Vansittartites become again terrified that there will be no good capitalist state in the centre of Europe to act as a bulwark against Bolshevism? If that is a true analysis, our danger is not that the logic of Vansittartism, which would be the destruction of Germany, would be carried out, but that having distracted our minds from the real task of organising against war and stopping the aggression of another Hitler, the very publicists who have misled us would once again betray us and urge a second peace which would allow the German militarist to survive.

KINGSLEY MARTIN

Who's Who. *A. & C. Black.* 70*s.*

From Dr. Richard IthamarAaron, editor of *Efrydiau Athronyddol* to Dr. Samuel Marinus Zwemer, author of *Zigzag Journeys in the Canal Country*, this invaluable publication, in its 94th year of issue, regales us with all relevant, and some enjoyably irrelevant, information. Mr. John Betjeman, we learn, has a taste for dirt-track racing, Mussolini for "violino," and Mr. T. W. Earp for silence. Mr. Christopher Isherwood claims, cagily and improbably, that his recreations are "usual." We are told that Mr. Vic Oliver's father was the Baron Victor von Samek, that if we want Hitler, we should ring Berlin 11, 6191, if Mosley, Victoria 9038. Two important classes are not adequately represented—foreign royalties and B.B.C. announcers.

Horizon. February, 1*s.* 6*d.*

Remarkably good number. Orwell most stimulating about Kipling, Spender discriminating and usually fair about poets of 1941, Augustus John's autobiography better than ever, Rollo Woolley's account of an R.A.F. pupil's flight most eloquent. Also a thoughtful article on Anglo-American relations and propaganda by Beatrice Leeds, and a clogged but spirited poem by George Barker.

Week-end Competitions

No. 631

Set by Saint-Loup

A first prize of two guineas and a second prize of half a guinea are offered for an extract of not more than twenty lines from a presumed poem by Browning, entitled "Thoughts of an Englishman Unable to Go Abroad."

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, March 16.

2. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 628

Set by Sigmund Pike

Mr. Robert Helpmann has recently delighted audiences with a ballet taken from Milton's *Comus*, and is said to be at work on a *Hamlet*. Competitors are invited to submit suggestions of theirs for a new ballet taken from literary sources. A synopsis, or description of some sort, in not more than 200 words should be given. Competitors may be serious or not, as they please.

Report by Sigmund Pike

Very few people took this competition as a joke, and attempts to frisk about balletomania were disappointing. Martin C. Anders did a funny-solemn piece with Karl Marx, writing the Communist Manifesto, as protagonist. A figure in white symbolises Singleness of Mind, and the *corps de ballet* provides Lines of Thought, which dance in conflict; at the end the scene is bathed in red light. Some of the edge is taken off this by the suggestion that "ballets based on literary sources à la Helpmann" are grotesque; but the type of ballet parodied is not Helpmann's (*Comus* is as concrete as *Lac des Cygnes*), but Massine's *Présages.*

Among the serious or would-be serious entries were the following: *Nausicaa*, *Oroonoko* (from the play by Thomas Southerne), Spenser's *Prothalamion*, Max Beerbohm's *The Happy Hypocrite*, *The Ancient Mariner*, scenes from *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest*, *The Shadow* (Andersen), *After the Fireworks* (story by Aldous Huxley), *Goblin Market*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Hound of Heaven*, Wordsworth's *Prelude*, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, *The Playboy of the Western World*, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *The Christmas Carol* (Dickens), Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes* and *Lamia*, *The Ascent of F6* (Auden and Isherwood), *Oliver Twist* (grotesque scenes), *The Rape of the Lock* and *Pickwick.*

The Ancient Mariner was both the most popular and the most practicable choice. Among the versions of Coleridge's poem, several of which exceeded competition length, I preferred Mary Hoad's, to whom goes the first prize. The second goes to Valentine for his *Rape of the Lock.* (Strictly, he overruns the 200 word limit, but I have made allowance for lists of characters, etc). Runners-up were "Sola" (*Ancient Mariner*), Anon (Wilde's *The Harlot's House*) and Alison Graham (*The Witches Ballad* by William Bell Scott).

FIRST PRIZE

THE MARINER

(A Ballet in Four Acts from Coleridge's Poem: "The Ancient Mariner")

Action takes place on boardship

MUSIC: "The Enchanted Lake," by Anatol Lladov

ONE: ICEY REGIONS

MARINER, SAILORS, ALBATROSS

Mariner and Sailors are working on deck. Arrival of Albatross causes them to stop and entice the bird. Mariner shoots bird with crossbow. Sailors first reproach Mariner, but later concur with him. Carry him off, triumphant.

TWO: TROPICS

MARINER, DEATH-FIRES, SAILORS, ALBATROSS, DEATH, LIFE-IN-DEATH, SOULS

Death-Fires enter. Sailors raise dead Albatross. Bring him to Mariner. Mariner and Bird dance, watched by Sailors in scorched stupor. Death and Life-in-Death arrive. Sailors die. Souls appear.

THREE: SAME

WATER-SNAKES, MARINER, ALBATROSS, FIRE-FLAGS, SAILORS

Mariner falls in love with Water-Snakes. His ecstasy causes bird to leave him. Sleeps in comparative peace, but is disturbed by Fire-Flags and sudden rising of Soulless Sailors, who fall to and navigate Ship. Mariner swoons.

FOUR: OFF SHORE

MARINER, SOULS, HERMIT

Mariner in a trance. Sailors' souls return. Their dance is ended by return to consciousness of Mariner, who sees approach of Hermit. He implores him to shrieve him of his sins, and receiving Hermit's staff, leaves for many journeyings. MARY HOAD

SECOND PRIZE

THE RAPE OF THE LOCK

Chief Characters:

BELINDA, THE BARON, ARIEL (Sylph), UMBRIEL (Gnome), THALESTRIS, SIR PUFF

(1) (*Belinda prepares*) Dance of Sylphs, very white and elegant—guardians of dressing-table. Gnomes (black) enter, dance, are driven out by Sylphs. Belinda, in meticulous deshabille, appears with Maid, who dances obsequiously about her. Sylphs approach and assist; Ariel directs operations. Thalestris comes in and admires.

(2) (*Hampton Court*) Typical eighteenth-century salon scene; black pages, fops, dowagers, etc. Suitable dances. Enter Baron and Sir Puff. Baron expresses to Sir Puff (who tries to dissuade him) plan to obtain Lock. Entrance of Belinda with Thalestris. Entrance of Ariel and Umbriel, who take up positions with Belinda and Baron. Belinda and Baron, Thalestris and Sir Puff do dance of greeting. At close Belinda and Baron join in game of cards. Ariel and Umbriel dance in frenzy; Umbriel holds out Lock; Baron cuts it. Thunderous music. Ariel falls. Lightning flashes. Mad dance of Belinda. Darkness.

(3) (*Where is the Lock?*) Sylphs are downcast. Belinda laments to Thalestris. Thalestris pleads with Puff, who pleads with Baron. Thalestris pleads with Baron. All of no avail. Belinda does pleading dance with Baron. He melts; looks for Lock—cannot find it. General search. Thalestris looks upward. All stop and point. Lights fade; curl, illumined, seen in darkened sky. Final dance including everybody. VALENTINE

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